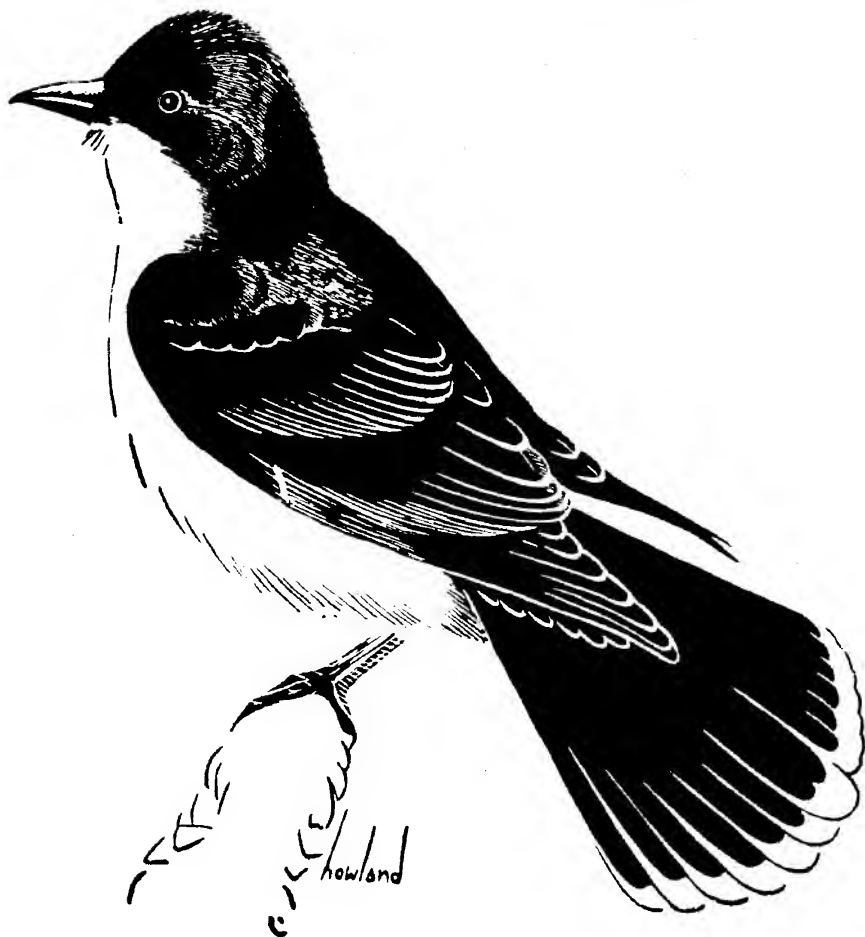


The **KINGBIRD**



VOL. 45, NO. 2

JUNE • 1995

FEDERATION OF NEW YORK STATE BIRD CLUBS, INC.

THE KINGBIRD (ISSN 0023-1606), published quarterly (March, June, September, December), is a publication of The Federation of New York State Bird Clubs, Inc., which has been organized to further the study of bird life and to disseminate knowledge thereof, to educate the public in the need for conserving natural resources, and to encourage the establishment and maintenance of sanctuaries and protected areas.

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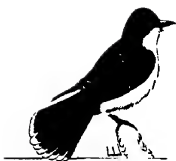
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PUBLICATION OF THE FEDERATION OF NEW YORK STATE BIRD CLUBS, INC

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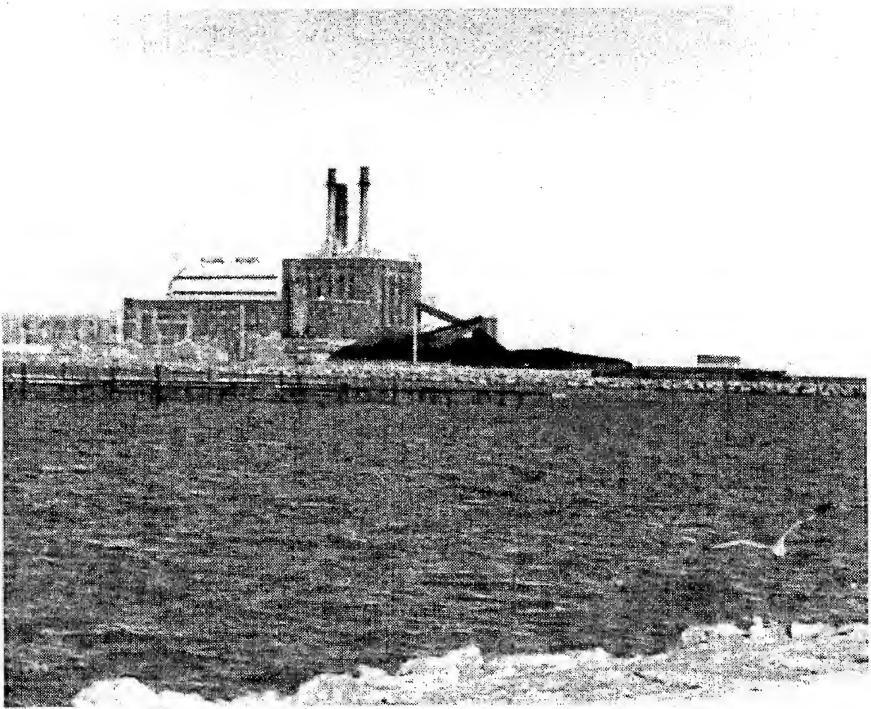


Figure 1. Dunkirk Harbor, Chautauqua Co., New York, looking west from the foot of the pier.

Photograph by Alan Benton.

DUNKIRK HARBOR: A PRIME BIRDING SPOT

ALLAN BENTON

On 1 January 1976, I decided to start my annual list with a trip to Dunkirk Harbor, a scant three miles from my home in Fredonia. There are three vantage points from which to look for birds, and I began at the westernmost, a marina at the foot of Mullet Street. Directly in front of me and a little to the left was the Niagara-Mohawk Power Corporation's steam powered electrical plant. To my extreme left was the southwest corner of the harbor, where the local conservation club has its club house and runs a duck banding operation in winter. As I got out of my car, I noticed a large bird on the tiny bit of beach in front of the conservation club. A quick glance revealed that it was a loon, and closer examination with my binoculars showed that it was not a Common Loon, but a Red-throated Loon, unusual here at any time. I was admiring this bird, and congratulating myself on a great start to the year, when a small bird landed on a rock just to the right of the loon. I switched my attention (and my binoculars) to the newcomer, and found that I was looking at a Purple Sandpiper, which we see perhaps once every ten years or so. What a day, I thought, as I reluctantly turned away and walked to the east side of the marina. Normally there are a few Mallard and some American Coot there, with a few gulls perched on the boat slips. But the first bird that caught my eye on this day was an Eared Grebe, a refugee from the far west which is a fairly regular but rare visitor. I had scored the hat trick: three rare birds in about ten minutes.

Dunkirk Harbor is not always like that. But from 1 November to 1 April it is one of the two best places for water birds in western New York; the other is the Niagara River. Lake Erie is a relatively shallow lake and, unlike Lake Ontario, it often freezes from shore to shore. The thousands of gulls, geese, ducks, grebes, loons, coots, cormorants and so on are left with only those two choices for finding open water. For many of them Dunkirk Harbor is the refuge of choice. The reason for the open water in the Niagara River is the speed of the current. At Dunkirk Harbor, it is due entirely to the works of man. The west end of the harbor was until about forty years ago a lovely fresh water marsh, haunt of Least and American Bitterns, rails, Marsh Wren and Red-winged Blackbird. The Niagara-Mohawk Power Corporation bought the land and built a coal fired power plant. The marsh, and all of its

inhabitants, disappeared. But the loss to the marsh birds was the gain for the water birds. The power plant draws thousands of gallons of cold water from Lake Erie just outside the harbor, uses it to cool its steam generators, and after passing through cooling towers discharges the heated water into the harbor at a temperature of no more (and probably not often much less) than 88°F. This warm water, pouring constantly into the end of the harbor, ensures that the harbor will never freeze over. Sometimes a northeast wind will blow floating lake ice into the harbor so that much of it is temporarily covered, but there is always open water. The birds know it, and flock to the fish filled water in great numbers.

I have been birding at the harbor for more than thirty years. My list of unusual birds seen there, in addition to the three already mentioned, includes Harlequin Duck, King Eider, all three scoters, Northern Gannet, Sabine's, Franklin's, Little, Laughing, Iceland, and Glaucous Gulls, and Black-legged Kittiwake. Moreover, I don't see every unusual bird that appears, such as Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Pomarine Jaeger, and others.

At the end of winter, local birders spend less time at the harbor proper, and divert their attention to Point Gratiot (locally pronounced "grass-shot"). This rounded projection into Lake Erie is just west of the power plant, a few hundred yards from the west end of the harbor. At the extreme end of the point is a historic lighthouse, and just inland from it is a tiny wood lot which, in April and May, is one of the best places in the area for migrating land birds. My theory about this exceptional place is that north bound migrants follow the lake shore in a northeasterly direction, arriving at the point to see water spreading out before them in the direction they are following. Great numbers of them drop into the little wood lot to rest and feed before continuing on their northward way across Lake Erie. At any rate, hundreds of warblers, sparrows, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, kinglets, Scarlet Tanager, orioles, Blue Jay and other migrants can be found there on a good day. There are resident Red-headed Woodpecker to add to the color as well as the sounds of this avian assemblage.

Dunkirk Harbor is easily reached from either east or west. If you are using the New York State Thruway, exit at Exit 59, and take a right on Route 60 at the first stoplight. Route 60 ends on Route 5, which runs along the lake shore in the city of Dunkirk (Fig. 2). If you go straight ahead on Lakeside Boulevard, you will drive along the lake on Wright Park Beach, which is outside the harbor but in winter may have good numbers and variety of waterfowl. In the years when the lake was lower, I saw my first ever Purple Sandpiper here.

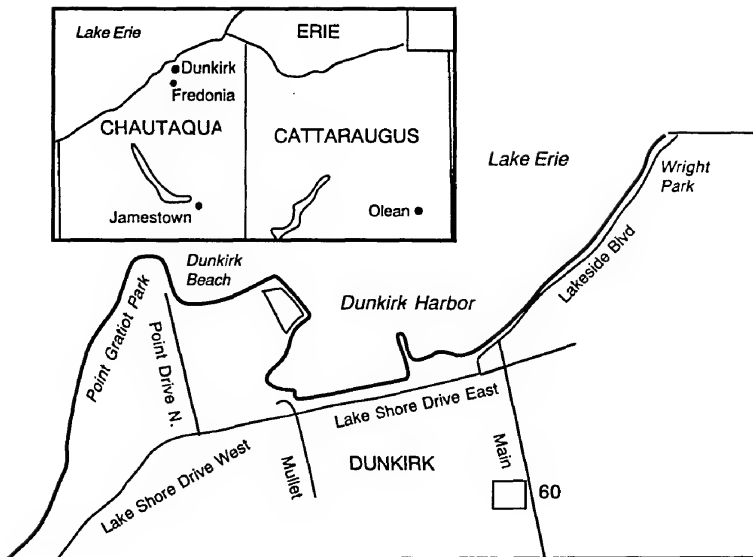


Figure 2. Map of Dunkirk Harbor and vicinity, showing routes to major birding sites. Many streets and roads in Dunkirk are omitted.

Return to Route 5, turn west on Lakeshore Drive East a few hundred yards to a stoplight at the foot of Main Street. The Dunkirk Pier lies directly to your right. This is the place from which to scan the harbor with a telescope. From the end of the pier you are within view of the entire harbor, both sides of the inner breakwalls as well as the outer harbor. Return to Lakeshore Drive (which now becomes Lakeshore Drive West), go west to Mullet Street on your right before the first stoplight. There is a lot at the end of Mullet Street where you can park next to the harbor and examine the western section of the harbor to better advantage. To the right of the marina, along the harbor wall, is the Dunkirk Yacht Club. Its extensive piers always harbor a variety of waterfowl, but a telescope is essential unless you want to walk a quarter of a mile. Last winter one of the Lake Erie Bird Club members, Joseph Gula Sr., was startled to see a pair of large yellow feet on a broken post under one of the piers. By bending over he could see that it was an immature Black-crowned Night-Heron. Usually the birds seen there are more prosaic: Pied-billed Grebe, Mallard, American Black Duck, an occasional Gadwall or American Wigeon, etc. Last winter several Double-crested Cormorant perched on these piers most of the time.

If you arrive via Route 5 rather than the Thruway, you will arrive at the junction of Route 60 and Lakeshore Drive East, and can follow the above directions from there. If you approach on Route 20, you will intersect Route 60 at a stoplight at the east edge of the village of Fredonia. Turn toward Dunkirk on Route 60, almost immediately pass the Thruway interchange and follow the above directions from there. Visitors who come from the east, perhaps coming from downstate on Route 17, or through Jamestown from the south, will find it easy to get on Route 60. The Jamestown exit of Route 17 is at Route 60. Exit northward there toward Dunkirk. You need only follow route 60 to reach Dunkirk in about 30 miles, following the directions given above after you pass the Thruway interchange.

Travelers from the south who enter Jamestown will most likely be on Route 60 already, and need only follow it through Jamestown and on northward to Dunkirk. You cannot get past Fredonia and Dunkirk from either east or west without intersecting Route 60 somewhere, and a turn onto it, northbound, will bring you to the lake sooner or later. If all else fails, consult your road map, or the map included as a part of this article. The tall stacks of the power plant are a good landmark, and can be seen for a considerable distance in all directions. And after all, Lake Erie is a pretty hard thing to miss. Birders who attend the 48th Annual Meeting of the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs in October will miss the best times for both the harbor and the point, but there may be a fall movement of land birds which is often rewarding, if less spectacular than the spring assemblages. Some early waterfowl and gulls will have arrived at the harbor, and both places are worth a look at any season. I hope to see you there.

292 Water Street, Fredonia, New York 14063

REPORT OF THE NEW YORK STATE AVIAN RECORDS COMMITTEE 1993

A total of 85 records of birds involving 115 reports is treated here by the Committee. These include individual reports resolved for 1976, 1987 and 1991, 20 reports from 1992 and 92 from 1993. Eleven reports for 1993 are still being reviewed. A few of these reports are of records that were accepted in previous reports of the NYSARC. Nonetheless, the number of reports submitted is a welcome increase from last year's submissions. Reports should be sent to the Secretary:

Jim Lowe, Secretary
New York State Avian Records Committee
c/o Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology
159 Sapsucker Woods Road
Ithaca, New York 14850

1993 ACCEPTED REPORTS

Northern Gannet (*Morus bassanus*). 1993-67-A: one off Hamlin Beach State Park, Lake Ontario, Town of Hamlin, Monroe Co., 22 November (BMe). 1993-68 A: one on Niagara River off Lewiston, Town of Lewiston, Niagara Co., 16 December (RA). These records add to the few from upstate New York of a species that is regular off Long Island.

American White Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*). 1993-18-A: one on Susquehanna River between Endwell and Vestal near Towns of Union and Vestal boundary, Broome Co., 10 April (RMi).

Magnificent Frigatebird (*Fregata magnificens*). 1993-15-A,B: one found alive on Bergen Point Golf Course, West Babylon, Town of Babylon, Long Island, Suffolk Co., 14 March (PS, SR). This bird apparently was brought northward by the major storm which moved from the Gulf of Mexico area along the Atlantic Coast. It died on 17 March and its skeleton in the American Museum of Natural History collection (AMNH 21469) is the second specimen from New York. Photographs are on file.

Ross's Goose (*Chen rossii*). 1993-64-A: two and then one individual with large flock of Snow Geese on Tomhannock Reservoir, Town of Pittstown, Rensselaer Co., 14, 28 November (WE).

Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*). 1993-16-A: one at Derby Hill Bird Observatory, Town of Mexico, Oswego Co., 28, 30 March (DC). 1993-30 A,B,C: two over West Mountain near Dover Furnace, Town of Dover, Dutchess Co., 15 May (HM, BB, JBt). This species is still on the list of species for which all observations should be submitted to the

NYSARC for review, despite the frequency with which it is reported downstate.

American Swallow-tailed Kite (*Elanoides forficatus*). 1993-20-A: one at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, Queens Co., 17 April (MP). 1993-29-A: one at Five Rivers Environmental Education Center, Delmar, Town of New Scotland, Albany Co., 11 May (RB).

Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*). 1993-47-A: one about four miles southwest of Mecklenburg, Town of Hector, Schuyler Co., 9 July (JG SG).

Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*). 1993-21-A: one at Mount Pleasant Observatory Hawk Watch, near Varna, Town of Dryden, Tompkins Co., 20 Apr (NB).

Gyr Falcon (*Falco rusticolus*). 1993-1-A: one at Buffalo Harbor, Buffalo, Erie Co., 2 January (RA). 1993-8-A,B: one off Route 18 near County Line, Town of Yates, Orleans Co., 26 February, 2 March (DT, GR). 1993 11-B,C: one, immature plumage, at mouth of Saranac River, Plattsburgh, Clinton Co., 3-29, 15 March (WK, TH). 1993-12-B,C: one gray morph at mouth of Saranac River, Plattsburgh, Clinton Co., 7, 9, 15, 25 March (WK, TH). 1993-13-A: one at Route 193 south of Woodville, Town of Ellisburg, Jefferson Co., 24 Mar (LC). 1993-37-A: one at Braddock Bay, Town of Greece, Monroe Co., 9 March (BE). 1993-38-B: one at Parma Hamlin Townline Road and Chase Road, Town of Hamlin, Monroe Co., 3 April (RS). See also 1992 Accepted reports. Apparently at least two individuals were present along Lake Ontario west of Rochester in 1993. The number of records from the winter 1992-93 was exceptional; most of the several reports during this same time period which were not accepted included insufficient detail to support the claimed identification.

Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*). 1993-5-A,B: one in field near Route 34 and intersection with Center Road, Scipio Center, Town of Scipio, Cayuga Co., 19,20 January (DM, JTn). 1993-45-A,B,C,D: one along Salmon Creek, Hogan Point, Town of Greece, Monroe Co., 23, 24, 28 May (GHn, JFr, CC, RS). 1993-48-A: one in field off Ridge Road near Route 812, Town of Lowville, Lewis Co., 16 July (LC), photographs on file. This bird was with a Common Crane (*Grus grus*), thought to be a bird that escaped from captivity in 1992.

Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*). 1993-41-A,B: one at outlet of Irondequoit Bay, Town of Irondequoit, Monroe Co., 21 April (BMe, CC). 1993 52-A: one at Westport, Town of Westport, Essex Co., 27 August (WK), videotape on file. This species formerly bred locally on Lake Ontario, but is now only an exceptionally scarce migrant anywhere in upstate New York.

- Wilson's Plover (*Charadrius wilsonia*). 1993-34-A: one at Goff Point and Hicks Island, Napeague, Town of Southampton, Long Island, Suffolk Co., 28 May (PL, TV), photographs on file.
- Marbled Godwit (*Limosa fedoa*). 1993-49-A: one at Braddock Bay, Town of Greece, Monroe Co., 27 July (BE). 1993-53-A: one at Tiff Nature Preserve, Buffalo, Erie Co., 27 August (GR). This species is regularly reported from Long Island but very scarce upstate.
- Wilson's Phalarope (*Phalaropus tricolor*). 1993-46-A,B,C,D,E: one pair with three young in grassy cow pasture on Lake Champlain one mile south of mouth of Great Chazy River, Town of Champlain, Clinton Co., 18, 25 June (RHZ, JH, CM, WK, HK), photographs on file. Full details of this first breeding record of the species for New York State appear in *The Kingbird* 43:273-277; 1993.
- Least Tern (*Sterna antillarum*). 1993-32-A: one at Sunset Bay, mouth of Cattaraugus Creek, Town of Hanover, Chautauqua Co., 18 May (JGz). There are fewer than a dozen upstate records of this endangered species.
- Marbled Murrelet (*Brachyramphus marmoratus*). 1993-61-A,B: one below Robert Moses Power Dam, St. Lawrence River, Town of Massena, St. Lawrence Co., 24 October (DC, SA). This is the first record of the species from New York, which, like all other reports in North America away from the Pacific Coast, appears to represent the Asian race *perdix*. Additional details appear in *Western Birds* 39:39-42; 1995 and *Birders' Journal* 2:276-277; 1993, but photographs taken of this bird (*American Birds* 48:105; 1994) were not submitted to the NYSARC.
- White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*). 1993-70-A: one at Cedar Beach, Town of Babylon, Suffolk Co., Long Island, 19 December (RK).
- Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*). 1993-51-A: one adult male off Craigville Road near Chester, Town of Chester, Orange Co., 9 August (JTo). This is the first record of the species for New York. There have been several previous reports of this species in the state, some of which are still under review. A report of a "female" plumaged bird (*Kingbird* 31:210; 1981) was accepted by the NYSARC as belonging to the genus *Selasphorus*, but was not identified as to species.
- Ash-throated Flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*). 1993-62-A: one at Jones Beach State Park, Town of Hempstead, Long Island, Nassau Co., 2 November (JFz). Details of this fifth report from New York appear in *The Kingbird* 44:162-163; 1994.
- Western Kingbird (*Tyrannus verticalis*). 1993-56-A: one off Route 57, 0.7 mile west of Point Peninsula village, Town of Lyme, Jefferson Co., 19

- September (DP). This species appears on Long Island annually between mid September and November, but is exceptionally scarce upstate.
- Northern Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*). 1993-55-A: one at Jones Beach State Park, Town of Hempstead, Long Island, Nassau Co., 18 September (MB).
- Mountain Bluebird (*Sialia currucoides*). 1993-6-A,B: one on the South Shore Road, Point Peninsula, Town of Lyme, Jefferson Co., 21, 27 January (LC, PC), photographs on file.
- Veery (*Catharus fuscescens*). 1993-69-A: one at Jones Beach State Park, Town of Hempstead, Long Island, Nassau Co., 13 December (JFz). The date is exceptionally late.
- Townsend's Warbler (*Dendroica townsendi*). 1993-28-A: one at Alley Pond Park, Queens Co., Long Island, 9 May (AB).
- Yellow-throated Warbler (*Dendroica dominica*). 1993-40-A: one at Seneca Park, Rochester, Monroe Co., 10 May (RS).
- Swainson's Warbler (*Limnothlypis swainsonii*). 1993-27-A: one at Elmira, Town of Elmira, Chemung Co., 29 April (JS).
- Western Tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*). 1993-39-A: one male at Washington Grove, Cobbs Hill Reservoir, Town of Brighton, Rochester, Monroe Co., 9 May (JBg).
- Black-headed Grosbeak (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*). 1993-33-A,B: one female at feeder on Forest Hill Road near Apalachin, Town of Owego, Tioga Co., 18-31 May (SO, HO, JBn, CB).
- Lark Sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*). 1993-63-A,B: one at Hamlin Beach State Park, Town of Hamlin, Monroe Co., 13,14 November (RS, CC), photograph on file. Another species found annually on Long Island but exceptional upstate.
- Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*Ammodramus caudacutus*). 1993-43- A: one at Kaiser-Manitou Beach, Town of Greece, Monroe Co., 2 June (RMy). 1993-44-A,B: one at Upper and Lower Lakes Wildlife Management Area, Town of Canton, St. Lawrence Co., 7, 9 June (DD, PO). 1993-59-A: one at Hogan Point, Town of Greece, Monroe Co., 3 October (RS). 1993-60-A: one at Hamlin Beach State Park, Town of Hamlin, Monroe Co., 17 October (CC). 1993-72 A: one at Hogan Point, Town of Greece, Monroe Co., 9 October (RS). See also 1992 Accepted Reports. This species nests on Long Island but is little known as a migrant upstate; these reports all appear to be of birds that show characteristics of the interior races *altera* or *nelsoni*.
- Harris's Sparrow (*Zonotrichia querula*). 1993-10-A,B,C: one on Lower Lake Road, Town of Yates, Orleans Co., 27, 28 February, 8 March (RS, DaT, GR), photograph on file.

Hoary Redpoll (*Carduelis hornemanni*). 1993-71-A: one at Hamlin Beach State Park, Town of Hamlin, Monroe Co., 4 December (RS).

1993 REPORTS, IDENTITY ACCEPTED, ORIGIN UNCERTAIN

Trumpeter Swan (*Cygnus buccinator*). 1993-23-A,B,C: one in field off Route 31 near Seneca River, Town of Tyre, Wayne Co., 23 April (JTr, NB, KM). No bands or other markings noted, but several efforts to establish the species in the eastern part of its former range, including Ontario, are possible sources for this bird.

Garganey (*Anas querquedula*). 1993-19-A,B,C,D: one male at Tonawanda Wildlife Management Area, Town of Alabama, Genesee Co., 16-19 April (WW, GR, PD, RS). A rumor than a drake Garganey had been lost from a nearby private collection shortly before this observation was made is untrue (*fide* NB); Garganey were reported from several other Eastern sites at approximately the same time period.

1993 REPORTS NOT ACCEPTED

Wood Stork (*Mycteria americana*). 1993-31-A: one at Cumberland Head, Lake Champlain, Town of Plattsburgh, Clinton Co., 15 May.

Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*). 1993-26-A: one over Coot Hill, Essex Co., 28 April.

Steller's Sea-Eagle (*Haliaeetus pelagicus*). 1993-24-A: one at Derby Hill Bird Observatory Hawk Watch, Town of Mexico, Oswego Co., 24 April.

Gyr Falcon (*Falco rusticolus*). 1993-4-A: one on Route 9, 3.5 miles north of intersection of Route 52, Town of Fishkill, Dutchess Co., 10 January. 1993-7-A: one at Stony Kill Environmental Education Center, Wappingers Falls, Town of Wappinger, Dutchess Co., 18 January. 1993-14-A: one at Point Peninsula, Town of Lyme, Jefferson Co., 12 March. 1993-38-A: one on Chase Road, Town of Hamlin, Monroe Co., 31 March.

King Rail (*Rallus elegans*). 1993-42-A,B: one at Brush Creek, North Hamlin Road, Town of Hamlin, Monroe Co., 31 May, 8 June.

Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*). 1993-58-A: one at Hamlin Beach State Park, Town of Hamlin, Monroe Co., 14 October.

Ladder-backed Woodpecker (*Picoides scalaris*). 1993-22-A: one at Binghamton, Town of Chenango, Broome Co., 22 April.

Gray Jay (*Perisoreus canadensis*). 1993-36-A: one on Schribner Road, Town of Wayland, Steuben Co., 17 February.

Brewer's Blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*). 1993-3-A,B: one at Tupper Lake, Town of Altamont, Franklin Co., 7-13 January.

1992 ACCEPTED REPORTS

- American White Pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*). 1992-60-A: two at Tonawanda Wildlife Management Area, Town of Royalton, Niagara Co., 16, 23, 24 May (GR).
- Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*). 1992-3-B: one on breakwall, Lake Erie, Buffalo, Erie Co., 9 July (GR). This is about the third upstate record of a species rare anywhere in New York State.
- Anhinga (*Anhinga anhinga*). 1992 -40-A: one over Central Park, Manhattan, New York Co., 28 April (JD). This is the first record of the species for New York.
- Roseate Spoonbill (*Ajaia ajaja*). 1992-17-C: one juvenile at Goethals Bridge Pond and Prall's Pond, Staten Island, Richmond Co., 21 August (RK), photograph on file. This is an additional report of a record accepted in our previous report.
- Gyr Falcon (*Falco rusticolus*). 1992-59-A: one at corner of Moscow and Lake Road East Fork, Town of Hamlin, Monroe Co., 24 October (BMe).
- Spotted Redshank (*Tringa erythropus*). 1992-23-C: one at Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn, Kings Co., 24 January (PD). This is an additional report of a record accepted in our previous report.
- Rufous-necked Stint (*Calidris ruficollis*). 1992-61-A: one at Town of Babylon Beach, Town of Babylon, Long Island, Suffolk Co., 9 August (RK).
- White-winged Tern (*Chlidonias leucopterus*). 1992-50-F: one at Perch River Wildlife Management Area, Town of Orleans, Jefferson Co., 3, 18 July (PD). This is an additional report of a record accepted in our previous report.
- Great Gray Owl (*Strix nebulosa*). 1992-33-B: one 3.6 miles north of Jamestown, Town of Ellicott, Chautauqua Co., 2 February (GR). This is an additional report of a record accepted in our previous report.
- Chuck-will's-widow (*Caprimulgus carolinensis*). 1992-15-A: one heard at Edgewater Lane, Town of Irondequoit, Monroe Co., 13 June (NM, LM).
- Fork-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus savana*). 1992-62-A: one at Robert Moses State Park, Fire Island, Town of Islip, Long Island, Suffolk Co., 13 October (RK).
- Northern Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*). 1992-28-B: one at Jones Beach State Park, Town of Hempstead, Long Island, Nassau Co., 24 September (RK). This is an additional report of a record accepted in our previous report.
- Lark Bunting (*Calamospiza melanocorys*). 1992-18-B: one at Robert Moses

State Park, Fire Island, Town of Islip , Long Island, Suffolk Co., 15 September (RK). This is an additional report of a record accepted in our previous report.
Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*Ammodramus caudacutus*). 1992-58-A: one at Beatty Point, Town of Greece, Monroe Co., 7 September (KG).

1992 REPORTS NOT ACCEPTED

Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*). 1992-37-A: one near Route 308 Town of Red Hook, Dutchess Co., 8 May.
Anhinga (*Anhinga anhinga*). 1992-2-A: three over Fort Tryon, The Cloisters, Manhattan, New York Co., 25 May.
Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*). 1992-7-A: one at Galeville Airport, Galeville, Town of Shawangunk, Ulster Co., 29 July.
Black-backed Wagtail (*Motacilla lugens*). 1992-26-A,B: one at Dead Horse Cove, Brooklyn, Kings Co., 21 December.
Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*). 1992-12-A: one flying over Lakeview Wildlife Management Area, Town of Ellisburg, Jefferson Co., 7 April. This bird was accepted as a crane of indeterminate species; see 1993 Accepted Reports.

1991 ACCEPTED REPORT

Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*). 1991-41-A: one over Great Gull Island, Suffolk Co., 25 May (JD, TM).

1987 ACCEPTED REPORT

Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*). 1987-46-A: one at the Arthur W. Butler Memorial Hawk Watch, Town of Bedford, Westchester Co., 6 September (JA).

1976 REPORT NOT ACCEPTED

Spotted Redshank (*Tringa erythropus*). 1976-2-A: one at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, Queens Co., 4 October.

With this report's three additions, Anhinga, Marbled Murrelet and Rufous Hummingbird, the New York State list now stands at 444, and Wilson's Phalarope was added as a new breeding species for the State.

Respectfully submitted,
New York State Avian Records Committee

Kenneth P. Able
Robert F. Andrie (Chairman)
Thomas J. Burke
Robert O. Paxton
Barbara J. Spencer

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BIRD FEEDERS AND CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS: A CAUTIONARY TALE

GREGORY S. BUTCHER¹ AND ERICA H. DUNN²

An estimated 30% of North Americans annually purchase bird food, an increase over the 20% estimated only a few years ago (Filion *et al.* 1985 and unpubl., Shaw and Mangun 1984). Birds at feeders are conspicuous, so Christmas Bird Count (CBC) field observers are likely to count more individuals of species that come to feeders if there are feeding stations along the CBC routes than if there are not. Thus, the numbers of feeder species in CBC's may have been artificially inflated over the past 25 years as more and more people offered bird food. This potential bias could be compounded by the practice of adding to the CBC totals the bird numbers seen by participants who remain at home to count birds at their feeders. Partly in recognition of the latter bias, *American Birds* (now *National Audubon Society Field Notes*) began in 1974 to record the number of "home based" observers taking part in each CBC and their hours of observation. The birds they observe are still incorporated in the reported totals, but starting in 1975, their hours of effort were not included in "party-hours".

This paper presents results of the 1990-91 CBC in Ithaca, New York, in which a separate accounting was made of birds seen at feeders both by field parties and home based observers. These data allow us to assess the importance of feeders to each species, and to evaluate the potential for bias in CBCs for those species that are regular visitors.

METHODS

Field parties in the Ithaca, New York, CBC on 1 January 1991 separated their records into birds seen near feeders and those sighted elsewhere. Also recorded were the numbers of feeders checked. About one-third of field parties only estimated the number of feeders observed. "Birds near feeders" was defined as all birds observed within sight of a feeder and whose presence could reasonably be attributed to attraction by that feeding station. Flybys and species not known to frequent feeders were excluded. The amount of time spent by field observers at each feeder was short, typically lasting 1-5 minutes. Home based observers, who reported watching their feeders from a few minutes to all day, also recorded their sightings separately.

Table 1. Comparisons of common feeder species recorded on the Ithaca, NY, CBC by field parties and by home based observers.

Species	Total N in CBC	% at feeders	N/feeder seen by:		Ratio
			Field parties	Home based observers	
American Goldfinch	270	66	0.30	2.29	7.5
Tufted Titmouse	166	71	0.31	1.62	5.2
Mourning Dove	712	42	0.86	3.84	4.5
Dark-eyed Junco	381	69	0.81	3.20	4.0
Northern Cardinal	382	56	0.72	2.40	3.3
White-breasted Nuthatch	226	58	0.46	1.40	3.0
Blue Jay	430	53	0.82	2.42	3.0
Downy Woodpecker	230	61	0.54	1.38	2.6
Evening Grosbeak	718	59	1.74	3.78	2.2
House Finch	1323	63	3.62	7.00	1.9
Black-capped Chickadee	1557	48	3.36	5.67	1.7
American Tree Sparrow	352	32	0.54	0.78	1.4
House Sparrow	1018	52	2.87	2.62	0.9

Field parties surveyed 145 feeders; home based observers surveyed 45 feeders. Ratio = N/feeder seen by home-based observers, divided by N/feeder seen by field parties.

RESULTS

Eighty-nine field observers took part in 41 parties, spent 186 hours in the field (118 on foot), and encountered about 145 feeders. An additional 45 feeders were watched by home based observers. Of the 74 species seen on the count, 31 (42%) were seen at least once at feeders, either by field parties or home based observers. Species were considered "common" if >100 were recorded by the CBC, and "feeder species" if >20% of all individuals were tallied at feeders. Twenty-four

species were defined as "feeder species" because at least 20%, average 54%, of individuals tallied on the CBC were seen at feeders (Tables 1 and 2). Of the remaining seven species seen at feeders, four were abundant (100+ recorded by field parties) but <1% of the individuals tallied were at feeders (Rock Dove, American Crow, Cedar Waxwing, and European Starling). Three uncommon species were also seen occasionally at feeders: Pileated Woodpecker, Brown Creeper, and Northern Mockingbird.

Home based observers found the same species to be common at feeders as did field parties, but the numbers they saw were quite different. The discrepancy between the two comes about because home based observers recorded more individuals per feeder than did field parties for every species except House Sparrow (Table 1). The ratios of birds/feeder from the two types of feeder count showed that, on average, home-based observers saw 2.4 times more birds per feeder than did field observers. The effect is not uniform across all species, however. For most, 1.4 to 4.5 times more individuals were seen by home-based observers, but 5.2 and 7.6 times as many were recorded for Tufted Titmouse and American Goldfinch, respectively (Table 1). These calculations were done only for species that were both abundant (>100 seen by field parties) and frequent visitors to feeders (at least 20% of individuals tallied at feeders), to avoid very high or low ratios resulting from small samples. In some uncommon species, all individuals recorded were at feeders (Table 2).

DISCUSSION

Nearly 200 feeders were observed in the 1991 Ithaca CBC, three-quarters of them by field parties. If birds are more visible and thus more readily counted when at feeders, then the CBC tallies for feeder species were probably considerably higher than if feeders had not been present. The magnitude of this potential bias cannot readily be tested in the field. The best possible comparison would be of CBC counts from areas with many feeders to counts in areas with few feeders. However, we could never be certain that true winter populations in the two sets of areas were equal at the outset. Indeed, there is good evidence that winter bird density is higher in areas with more feeders (Brittingham and Temple 1988, Graber and Graber 1979, O'Connor 1980). More studies similar to ours would at least help determine whether the Ithaca CBC has a particularly high number of feeders, although we suspect the problem is general.

Another benefit of similar studies would be to document which birds are "feeder species". Data from Project FeederWatch, a volunteer survey of feeders run by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and the Long Point Bird Observatory, show which species visit frequently, but can give no perspective on the proportion of the population that visits feeders. European Starling, for example, is a frequent visitor according to Project FeederWatch, but our data indicate that only a tiny fraction of the starling population visits feeders on a given day. This proportion

**Table 2. Uncommon feeder species recorded at feeders
by field parties and by home based observers.**

Species	Total reported	Percent at feeders	% seen at feeders by	
			field parties	home based observers
Hairy Woodpecker	67	73	37	36
Red-breasted Nuthatch	38	53	21	32
Red-bellied Woodpecker	37	73	32	41
White-throated Sparrow	33	69	45	24
Northern Flicker	25	24	12	12
Song Sparrow	21	24	5	19
Carolina Wren	20	45	10	35
Ruffed Grouse	19	21	5	16
Purple Finch	8	100	0	100
Sharp-shinned Hawk	7	43	0	43
Brown-headed Cowbird	2	100	100	0

might vary among locations, dates, times of day, weather conditions or natural food supplies. Further data like ours would elucidate the amount of variation in proportions of each species visiting feeders in different years and different locations.

The remainder of this discussion sets aside the concern that field party counts of feeder species may be biased, and focuses on home based observers. The inclusion in CBC totals of home based counts poses some special, additional problems for interpreting trends in winter populations of feeder birds. First, home based observers in our study recorded substantially more birds per feeder than did field parties. House Sparrow was the only species that both groups reported present at feeders at about the same level of abundance. We suspect that sparrows resident near feeders spend a large part of the day at or near those feeders. Thus, the chances of field parties seeing House Sparrow at feeders passed once during the day are about as high as for home-based observers watching one feeder all day long. American Goldfinch, by contrast, spend much of the day away from feeders. Home based observers would have a high chance of seeing a flock at some point in the day, but field parties could miss most of the visits to feeders.

CBC data are usually standardized in order to compare data from counts with very different levels of coverage. Most commonly, this is done by expressing the number of birds seen as birds per party-hour (Bock and Root 1980, Butcher and McCulloch 1990). A problem arises,

however, in deciding how to treat the hours spent observing bird feeders by home based counters. Should the hours of home based observation be taken into account when calculating birds per party-hour for feeder species (assuming we know which these are for a given count)? A further difficulty arises because hours spent by home based observers are poorly quantified. Most people don't watch continuously, and it is hard to tally the time spent in frequent brief checks on feeder activity. These problems can be clearly illustrated with a simple hypothetical example. Suppose a CBC with one participant tallies 100 individuals of a single species in a count circle with no feeders, during 10 hours. The result is 10 birds/party-hr. Now do a rerun of the count, adding a stop at a feeder. This time, on the assumption that the birds concentrate at feeders and chances of seeing them are increased, 110 individuals are recorded. Result: 11 birds per party hour, with 1 bird per party-hr seen at feeders. Rerun a third time, still stopping at a feeder and repeating the count of 110 in 10 party-hrs; but this time, add a second feeder with a home-based observer who puts in 5 hours and sees 20 birds (2 times more per birds/feeder than were seen by the field counter). Should the final tally be 130 birds in 10 party hours, resulting in 13 birds/party-hr if feeder hours are excluded from the calculation, as is the current practice for CBC analyses? Or is it 130 birds in 15 party hours (giving 8.7 birds/party-hr when feeder hours are included)? In this example, either inclusion or exclusion of hours spent by home based observers still leads to about 20% alteration in the 11 birds party-hr seen by field parties alone.

A relatively simple solution to the problems posed by home based observers is for CBC compilers to record separately the numbers of birds tallied by participants at home. These numbers could be printed in CBC summaries in parentheses following the grand total for each feeder species. The procedure should not add a great burden either to counters or CBC compilers because relatively few species are involved, and should not importantly add to cost of printing or data base management.

Separate record keeping for birds seen by home based observers would confer several benefits. In combination with field party totals, it would give some indication of which species are "feeder species." Users of the data could calculate birds/party-hr for each species as deemed appropriate for their purposes. Long stints at feeders bring to light a high proportion of the sightings of certain uncommon species, sometimes the only sightings (Table 2). Separate accounting of these birds would tell us something about the importance of feeders in

extralimital winter records. Lastly, with data on birds seen separately by field parties and home based observers, long term trends could be calculated for CBC counts based on field party observations alone. A comparison of CBC trends for feeder and non-feeder species to trends in Breeding Bird Survey data might tell us whether CBC field totals have been biased upwards by wide-spread increases in the hobby of winter bird feeding.

We would like to repeat the analyses reported in this paper for other geographic locations. Any CBC count compilers who are willing to collect data are asked to contact the second author.

SUMMARY

Participants in the 1990-91 Ithaca, New York, Christmas Bird Count recorded the number of each species seen at bird feeders, whether by home-based observers or by field parties. In 27 species over half of all individuals recorded were at feeders. Because birds visiting feeders are probably more conspicuous than otherwise, increases in the hobby of bird feeding over the past several decades likely has inflated CBC counts of feeder species. Moreover, home based observers in this study counted as many as 7.6 times more birds/feeder than did field parties. Inclusion of home-based feeder observations in CBC totals can have large effects on birds/party-hr, whether or not observation hours at feeders are used in the calculations. We recommend that numbers of birds seen by home based observers always be reported separately in published accounts and in CBC data bases. More studies like ours could elucidate the range of variation in proportions of each species likely to be found at feeders, and how this proportion changes with location, weather and natural food conditions.

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THE MIGRATION OF RED-THROATED LOON ON LAKE ONTARIO

WILLIE D'ANNA

The status of the Red-throated Loon is something of an anomaly in the Buffalo Ornithological Society (B.O.S.) region, which stretches on Lake Ontario from Point Breeze in Orleans County east to Grimsby Beach, Ontario, a length of 107 miles. It includes all of the Lake Ontario shoreline in Region 1 as well as the adjacent Niagara peninsula of Ontario. Beardslee and Mitchell (1965:85) call Red-throated Loon an uncommon transient visitant that is most frequently recorded from Lake Ontario, where it is sometimes common in April. The highest counts they give are 125 off Lakeside Beach State Park on 25 April 1954 by B. Nathan *et al*, and 13 on the April Count on 6 April 1953. Since then, this species has seldom been recorded on B.O.S. Counts, with maxima of 13 on 20 May 1990 (B.O.S., 1990) and four on 15 May 1977 (B.O.S., 1977). A review of "Noteworthy Records" in *The Prothonotary*, newsletter of the B.O.S., since 1965 reveals only seven records of more than two individuals. The highest counts were six on the Allegheny Reservoir on 17 May 1970 by R. Sundell (B.O.S., 1971) and five at Olcott on Lake Ontario on 23 November 1975 by D. Freeland (B.O.S., 1975).

On Thursday, 11 November 1993 Betsy Potter and I observed a large migratory flight of Red-throated Loon over Lake Ontario. From 7:30 AM to 12:30 PM I counted 223 Red-throated Loon from the foot of Quaker Road and from the cliff at Golden Hill State Park, both in the Town of Somerset in Niagara County. At about 1:45 PM I counted four more off Shadigee in the Town of Yates in Orleans County. Nearly all of the loons were flying west, low over the water, and beyond a mile from shore. On Sunday, 14 November, I recorded 181 Red-throated Loon from the same locations. Although the flight seemed stronger on Sunday, less time spent counting and poor visibility due to rain contributed to a smaller total. Our one day count of 227 Red-throated Loon is the highest ever recorded in the current B.O.S. study area. Not only are these maxima for the B.O.S. study area, they surpass all other significant counts by an order of magnitude!

What is intriguing about our observations, however, is that they may not be unusual. Bull (1985:52) and quarterly reports in *The Kingbird* since summer 1984 indicate that this species has occurred in much larger numbers off eastern Orleans and Monroe Counties, outside the

B.O.S. study area but less than 50 miles east of where we made our observations. Bull gives a record of 500 off Webster Park in Monroe County on 14 April 1952 by Kemnitzer. Region 2 reports include a count of 1008 at Hamlin Beach State Park on 28 November 1986 (Griffith, 1987) and an extraordinary total of over 2000 on 31 October 1989 by W. Listman (Griffith, 1990). These two counts were made within eleven miles of Point Breeze, the eastern boundary of the B.O.S. study area. The only other reports that I have found which are higher than 227 come from Brett Ewald (pers. comm.). Brett had been conducting a daily water bird count in the autumn of 1993 at Hamlin Beach State Park. On 10 November 1993 his count for this species was over 1200. A few days later the Hamlin watch recorded 1390! It was Ewald's telephone report on the evening of 10 November which alerted me to the possibility of seeing a large number of Red-throated Loon in the B.O.S. region. My high count occurred the next day. While large flights of Red-throated Loon may not occur annually, they may occur more frequently than have been recorded in the B.O.S. area.

The status of Red-throated Loon statewide and, in particular, along the New York side of Lake Ontario is interesting. Bull (1985) calls it a "common to locally abundant migrant on Lake Ontario and on the ocean. Highly variable in numbers, though scarce at times. Usually rare on the smaller lakes." This seems to agree with its status in Region 2 (Genesee Ornith. Soc., 1985), where it is a "regular, common to very common (sometimes abundant) spring and fall transient." However, records from *Kingbird* Regions 5 and 6, located at the southeast and east ends of Lake Ontario, respectively, indicate that the maximum count in those areas is only 16, recorded on 6 November 1984 at Derby Hill in Oswego County. Records show that in the B.O.S. study area the Red-throated Loon is a rare to uncommon migrant, though occasionally very common. Although Beardslee and Mitchell (1965) indicate that the species may be common in April, it appears that the largest numbers occur in the autumn. In Region 2, the species is uncommon to abundant. In Region 5 it is rare to uncommon, and it is rare in Region 6.

In an attempt to explain why is this species apparently so much more numerous in the Rochester Region, I list the following as possible contributing factors:

- 1) the Red-throated Loon migrates closer to shore in Region 2.
- 2) Region 2 has better observation points, which project further out into Lake Ontario.
- 3) Region 2 observers spend more time observing on Lake Ontario than elsewhere.

I believe that the distance at which these loons migrate off shore has much to do with the paucity of records of large numbers in the B.O.S. region. My observations on 11 and 14 November 1993 made it apparent that the Red-throated Loon flew further out than did the Common Loon. At our first observation point at Quaker Road on 11 November, it took me several minutes to find the "flight line" of the Red-throated Loon. It was necessary to use a telescope in order to keep finding the birds. The few individuals that we saw in the water were also further out than were the Common Loon. Brett Ewald (pers. comm.) has told me that he too has observed this phenomenon. If this is consistent, it could mean that this species is often missed because it flies so far offshore.

If for some reason Red-throated Loon migrates closer to shore in Region 2 than in B.O.S. Region, this could help explain why the Rochester area records so many more than the neighboring Regions. The orientation of the shoreline may be important for the same reason that Braddock Bay records many more raptors along Lake Ontario than does the B.O.S. region. The shoreline of Lake Ontario generally runs east-west the B.O.S. region, but starts to dip southeasterly at Hamlin Beach State Park in Region 2 and continues to do so to Irondequoit Bay. In the spring raptors which are flying east hit Lake Ontario west of Braddock Bay and are funneled by the shoreline and become more concentrated over the hawk watch since hawks are reluctant to fly over water. Similarly the loons, which are headed west and are reluctant to fly near land, are more concentrated at points west of Irondequoit Bay. Hamlin Beach State Park juts out slightly into the lake, which helps to get the observer even closer to these birds. This combination may help make this site an excellent location for recording the loon migration.

It is also likely that Rochester birders spend more time checking Lake Ontario than do birders in the B.O.S. region. Rochester is located on the lake and there is a relatively large area of park land along the shore. It is only natural that the birders there would be drawn to the lake. On the other hand, Buffalo is 30 miles from Lake Ontario and birders there are more likely to visit the north shore of Lake Erie, the Niagara River, or Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge. Observer effort may be the most important factor to explain the apparent difference in abundance of the Red-throated Loon in the two Regions. Indeed, while the first two reasons listed may be important, they do not explain the record of 500 at Webster Park cited by Bull (1965). Webster is at a location where westward flying loons should be further offshore because of the orientation of the shoreline.

Why are the loons migrating west? Very few loons winter on the Great Lakes, but they are numerous at that time on both coasts of North America. Where are they going? Since they are headed west, this would imply that the largest numbers may be in the Ontario sector of the B.O.S. region or further west near Hamilton, Ontario. William Smith (pers. comm.) counted 190 Red-throated Loon moving west at Hamilton Bay around the time I was recording large numbers. Although Red-throated Loon is rarely reported inland, the westward flying loons seen by Smith would soon reach the end of the lake. Since they were not seen returning east they probably proceeded along an overland route. Although Smith's count is significant, it is only a small percentage of the numbers seen at Hamlin Beach and it cannot be assumed that all the loons follow the same route. Still, it seems unlikely that the loons are turning around on Lake Ontario and heading east. My observations and those from Hamlin Beach indicate that nearly all loons are moving west. There are no records of significant numbers between the Town of Somerset and Hamilton. Could some possibly be turning around and migrating east further out on the lake where they cannot be seen? If so, this would seem to be a large expenditure of energy with no apparent benefits.

To answer these questions we need more records of migrating Red-throated Loon from points west of Somerset or from the north shore of Lake Ontario, including the direction of flight. Several people have told me that they do not believe they could identify a distant Red-throated Loon in flight. With experience, however, it is really not that difficult. The first step is to distinguish loons from the other migrating water birds. The difference in the speed of the wing beat can be detected even at enormous distances. Ducks flap much more quickly than loons, gulls much more slowly. The loon's distinctive shape of heavy body, long head and neck, and trailing feet can be recognized quite easily at fair distances. Cormorants are probably the birds most similar in shape to loons but they are much darker overall, appearing quite uniform. To separate the Red-throated from the Common Loon, observers should look for the Red-throated Loon's relatively smaller, slimmer head and neck and slightly faster wing beat. In the autumn another very good mark is the much whiter head and neck of the Red-throated Loon. At a great distance the head and neck of the winter plumaged Red-throated Loon tends to disappear while the head and neck of a Common Loon remains visible. Unless you have a direct comparison between the two species, absolute size can be deceiving, especially at great distances. It is much safer to use relative size and proportions, such as the Red-

throated Loon's relatively smaller head and neck mentioned above. Watching the Red-throated Loon migration over the lake is much like hawk watching when the hawks are specks in the sky. There are two very big differences, however. First, the loons are at eye level, which enables the observer to find the birds more quickly. Second, it is much easier to use a telescope on the loons, which is essential for their identification.

One location in the B.O.S. region where an observer should be able to get much closer to the flight line of the loons is at Port Weller, Ontario at the terminus of the Welland Canal. Two man-made peninsulas, one on either side of the canal, jut over a mile out into Lake Ontario. A long walk is necessary to reach the end but if one picked the right day it could prove to be fruitful. The experiences of Brett Ewald and myself this fall have shown that loons will often fly on a southwest wind. Lighter winds appear to be more favorable than strong winds. At Hamlin Beach Common Loon was recorded migrating throughout October and November with peak counts occurring around the third week of October. Red-throated Loon was first seen in mid October and were recorded throughout November, with the peak occurring during the second week of November. Rochester birders feel that the spring is less productive for loon flights and that big flight days occur less frequently and involve much smaller numbers. However, it is still possible to see a significant flights in the spring, particularly in April. The direction of flight at that time as well as the most favorable winds are still unknown to me.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author would like to thank Dr. Gerald Rising for his helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper and Brett Ewald for keeping me informed about the Red-throated Loon migration at Hamlin Beach State Park.

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**FEDERATION OF NEW YORK STATE BIRD CLUBS, INC.
47TH ANNUAL MEETING**

**Rosendale, NY
23-25 September 1994**

The 47th Annual Meeting of the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs was called to order by William Lee, President, at the Williams Lake Hotel in Rosendale, N.Y. at 2:00 P. M. Friday, 23 September 1994. The roll call of member clubs was answered by 56 representatives of 26 member clubs (with a delegate from one additional club answering Saturday morning). A motion to waive the reading of the minutes of the 46th Annual Meeting, published in *The Kingbird* 44(2):99-105, was approved. The Treasurer's Report was distributed by Berna Lincoln so that it could be reviewed carefully by the delegates before its formal submittal on Saturday.

A Committee on Resolutions for this meeting was elected. The members of this committee are Barbara Butler and Donald Windsor.

Bill Lee delivered the President's Report that included the following items:

- A project to revise the New York State bird book has begun. A fund raising Committee has been appointed.
- A new award, known as the Elon Howard Eaton Memorial Award, has been established. This annual award will be administered and funded by the Eaton Birding Society. The first presentation of this award will be made at the banquet Saturday evening.
- The archives of the Federation have been delivered to the Koch Library of Cornell University where they will be permanently stored. Members of the Federation are encouraged to visit the Koch Library to refer to items contained in our historical records and to see other items in the collections housed there.
- The 1981-1990 Ten-year Index of *The Kingbird* was compiled and will be distributed soon.
- During the past year the Federation has enjoyed outstanding cooperation and assistance from two New York State agencies, the Department of Environmental Conservation and the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. Our contacts with these agencies have been enhanced by Bob Miller and Joe Grimaldi, respectively. In addition, we received exceptional support from Norton Miller and David Steadman of the New York State Museum.

- Harriet Marsi has recently resigned as Chairperson of the Conservation Committee and member of the Executive Committee. Bill expressed the thanks of the Federation to Harriet for her many years of dedicated service.
- During the past year we experienced a 10 percent decrease in the number of individual memberships. Bill noted that individual membership dues make up about 90 percent of the income of the Federation. Many members of our clubs are unaware of the existence of the individual member category. He encouraged delegates to share with him any ideas and suggestions for attracting new members.
- Bill expressed his thanks to the officers and members of the Executive Committee for their support during the past year.

Bill Lee announced that our 48th Annual Meeting will be held 6-8 October 1995 at Fredonia, hosted by the Lake Erie Bird Club. The 49th Annual Meeting will be at Albany, 6-8 September 1996. The host club for that meeting is the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club. The 51st Annual Meeting will be held in Rochester in 1998. The Genessee Ornithological Society and the Rochester Birding Association are joint hosts for that meeting.

Stanley Lincoln, Chairperson, presented the report of the Nominating Committee consisting of himself, Harriet Marsi and Chad Covey. Nominated to serve one year terms of office were the following:

President	William J. Lee
Vice President	Robert E. Budliger
Recording Secretary	William B. Reeves
Corresponding Secretary	Valerie M. Freer
Treasurer	Berna B. Lincoln

Voting on this slate of officers was deferred until later in the meeting when more delegates would be present.

Bill Lee reported that the New York State Avian Records Committee has functioned effectively for the past year.

Bill announced that no grant will be awarded to a member club this year. The Member Club Grant, available annually, provides up to \$100 to a club for an effective and innovative project. The date for annual notification requesting applications for this award from member clubs has been changed from late to early in the spring. This year's Lillian Stoner Award winner is Christopher Hynes of the Cayuga Bird Club. Two authors have been chosen as winners of the John J. Elliott Award for Best Papers in *The Kingbird*. They are Ken Feustel for "An Ephemeral Shorebird Habitat at Cedar Overlook Beach" and Polly Rothstein for "Cooper's Hawk Nesting in a Suburban Yard." The winner of the new Elon Howard Eaton Memorial Award is Timothy H. Baird. This award

will be presented by Stephen W. Eaton, son of Elon Eaton for whom the award was named.

Charlie Smith reported for the Research Committee on three projects supported or sponsored by the Federation during 1994. These were the County Checklist Project (coordinated by Berna Lincoln), the State Parks Checklists Project (coordinated by the Birdlife Advisory Committee of the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation) and the Breeding Bird Survey of the National Biological Survey of the Department of the Interior (112 routes in New York State coordinated by Charles R. Smith). An additional project, a Summer Foray to St. Lawrence County to survey the Upper and Lower Lakes Wildlife Management Area, had to be canceled due to lack of sufficient participants.

Phyllis Jones reported that the Bibliography Committee has been reactivated. She announced that the members of this committee are Allen Benton, Barbara Butler, Valerie Freer, Phyllis Jones (Chairperson), Walton Sabin, Charles Smith, and Donald Windsor. Reports of this committee's compilation of published reports on New York State birds will be published annually in *The Kingbird*.

Bill Lee presented the report of the Membership Committee prepared by Berna Lincoln. Our present roll consists of 575 annual individual memberships, 83 life memberships and 39 member clubs.

Bob Miller, reporting for the NYSDEC, discussed a national wildlife funding initiative sponsored by New York and several other states as an amendment to the Robertson-Pittman Act. This new method of supporting projects to benefit wildlife observation, such as viewing sites, habitat improvements, etc., would be funded by taxes on sales of outdoor equipment. The bill incorporating these changes is expected to be introduced in Congress during the spring of 1995. It is anticipated that New York could receive up to \$17.5 million from the federal government with a 25 percent matching contribution required from the state. The Return a Gift to Wildlife Program does not have sufficient funds to support this state contribution. It collects about \$1 million per year. Bob Budliger suggested that a committee be appointed to develop a position for the Federation on this issue.

Bob discussed the increasing population of Double-crested Cormorant throughout the Great Lakes area. He reported that one of the largest breeding colonies is at Little Galloo Island in Lake Ontario. The number of breeding pairs at this site was 5,000 in 1993 and 3,700 in 1994. This fall a public meeting was held at Watertown to discuss the consequences of this problem. The people who are most concerned are

people who fish for recreation and the businesses they patronize. A task force will be established by the NYSDEC to study the impact of the cormorants on Lake Ontario and Oneida Lake. Migrating flocks of up to 2,000 Double-crested Cormorants have been observed on Oneida Lake feeding on Walleyed Pike and Yellow Perch. Bob noted that a full environmental impact statement was completed and accepted on the problem of Laughing Gull breeding near John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York City. A restricted license for shooting Laughing Gull has been issued annually for the past several years. About 3,000 gulls were killed in 1994 to prevent collisions with jet aircraft during landings and takeoffs. DEC is working with the National Park Service and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service to move this colony, the northernmost breeding site of Laughing Gull on the east coast.

The DEC has confirmed that 22 pairs of Peregrine Falcon bred in New York State during the past summer producing 35 offspring. A new Peregrine Falcon nesting site was found at Breakneck Ridge opposite Storm King Mountain. A total of 23 pairs of Bald Eagle nested in the state this year. They fledged 23 young eagles. A new nest on the Hudson River failed to produce any eaglets.

Manny Levine, Chairperson of the Publications Committee, stated that *The Kingbird Index* for 1981-1990 is now being printed and will be mailed during the next week. Manny thanked Jim Clinton and Don Windsor for their excellent work in compiling this index.

Manny reported on progress on the new New York State bird book entitled *Bull's Birds of New York State*. A joint copyright agreement between The Federation of New York State Bird Clubs, Inc. and the American Museum of Natural History is being developed. The Federation is currently seeking donations from individuals and foundations to fund this project. This book will be produced by a number of authors and artists. Prospective authors are currently being furnished with sample species accounts. The book will include only those species which are currently on the New York State checklist and those which may be added before the publication cutoff date. The next issue of *New York Birders* will contain a feature article on the book. The scheduled publication date of *Bull's Birds of New York State* will coincide with the 50th anniversary of the Federation in the fall of 1998. A prospective publisher of the book is Cornell University Press.

Max Wheat, Editor of *New York Birders*, expressed his thanks to the editors of club newsletters for sending him a great deal of interesting copy. He reported that the quality of writing in the newsletters is improving continuously. When he uses material from these sources, he

gives them credit in his article. He is running a series of articles written by Winston Brockner, a charter member of the Federation, on the early history of this organization.

Stan Lincoln, Chairperson of the Nominating Committee moved that the slate of nominees listed earlier in the meeting be elected. There were no nominations from the floor. After a motion to close nominations was approved, Stan moved that the Recording Secretary cast one ballot to elect the slate. The motion was approved unanimously by the Council of Delegates.

An Audit Committee consisting of Richard Sloss (Chairperson), Irving Cantor and Norman Stotz was elected unanimously.

A Nominating Committee, including the three most recent past presidents, with Stanley Lincoln as Chairperson and Chad Covey and Harriet Marsi as members, was nominated and elected.

Norman Stotz stated that the Galesville Airport in Ulster County, belonging to the US Military Academy, consists of 620 acres with 243 of these designated as wetlands. The local community wishes to obtain this surplus government property as a recreation area. The Academy prefers its conversion to a nature preserve. New York City Audubon Society has supported establishment of a nature preserve. The information on this topic was referred to the Resolutions Committee for drafting of an official resolution.

The meeting recessed at 4:30 P.M.

At 9:00 A.M. Saturday morning Valerie Freer, President of the host club, the Sullivan County Audubon Society, welcomed all those attending this annual meeting held jointly with the annual meeting of the Association of Field Ornithologists. She introduced Greg Butcher, President of the AFO, who introduced the other officers and briefly discussed the history of that organization of 2,000 members. President Bill Lee also welcomed the delegates to both meetings and presented a brief history of the Federation. He thanked Valerie and the host club for the organization and operation of the joint meeting. Valerie then thanked members of the Ralph T. Waterman Bird Club and the John Burroughs Nature Club for their assistance with field trips during the weekend.

The Saturday session of the Council of Delegates was called to order by Bill Lee at 9:30 A.M.

Berna Lincoln, Treasurer, presented the financial report for the year ended 31 December 1993. The summary of this report showed total assets of \$69,893.47, liabilities of \$3,858.10 and net worth of \$66,035.37. These totals reflected no material change in the financial status of the

Federation during the past year. The mortgage on Bass Island was satisfied during 1993. Income exceeded expenses by \$891.81 during the year. A motion to accept this report was made, seconded and approved unanimously.

Richard Sloss, Chairperson, presented the report of the Audit Committee stating that the financial statements examined by the committee fairly present the financial condition and the operating results of the Federation for the year ended 31 December 1994. The other members of this committee were Irving Cantor and Norman Stotz. A motion to accept this report was made, seconded and approved unanimously.

Andy Mason moved that the New York State Bluebird Society be accepted as a member club of the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Barbara Butler read the resolution prepared by the Resolutions Committee supporting designation of Galesville Airport as a nature preserve. A motion to approve the resolution and to send copies to the Superintendent of the US Military Academy and the Commissioner of the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation was made, seconded and approved by the Council of Delegates.

Following reading of a resolution thanking the host club, the Sullivan County Audubon Society, the meeting was adjourned at 10:00 A.M.

The Friday evening program featured Donna Tracy who presented an informative live raptor demonstration followed by a round table discussion on Issues and Actions in Owl Conservation and Biology moderated by Elissa M. Landre. Panelists and the topics they discussed were:

- Gaps in the Literature and the Directions for Future Research - Dr. Richard J. Clark, Professor of Biology, York College, PA
- Wintering Ecology of Snowy Owl in Massachusetts, Including Pellet and Prey Analysis the Role of the non-professional Biologist - Norman Smith, Director of the Massachusetts Audubon Society's Blue Hills Trailside Museum, Milton, MA
- Twenty-five Years of Barn Owls - Leonard J. Soucy, Jr., Founder and Director of the Raptor Trust, Millington, NJ
- Great Horned, Screech and Saw-whet Owls in Urban Settings - Dr. Dwight G. Smith, Professor of Biology, Southern Connecticut State University

The early field trip Saturday morning was a walk around the property of the Williams Lake Hotel led by Scott Graber.

Two papers sessions were held on Saturday. The morning session, moderated by Paul Buckley, included the following papers:

- Changes in winter abundance of Sharp-shinned Hawk (*Accipiter striatus*) in New England. Charles D. Duncan
- Status and conservation biology of Northern Saw-whet Owl breeding in the central and southern Appalachian Mountains. Matthew P. Rowe and Kevin M. Dodge
- Landscape composition and structure in the vicinity of Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) nest sites in Maryland. Jim Fregonara
- Habitat selection of Wood Thrush nesting in East Texas. N. Ross Carrie.
- Proximate factors related to dispersal in screech-owls: A new model based on hormones, body condition and behavior. James R. Belthoff and Alfred M. Dufty, Jr.
- Post-fledging behavior of screech-owls: Effects of behavioral dominance on timing of dispersal. Ethan A. Ellsworth and James R. Belthoff
- Effects of food availability on dispersal movements of young Burrowing Owl. R. Andrew King and James R. Belthoff

During lunch the delegates were addressed by Congressman Maurice Hinchey, who spoke on the status of pending conservation legislation and prospects for enactment of various bills during the current legislative session.

The afternoon papers session was moderated by Valerie M. Freer. The papers presented were:

- Owl migration ecology at Braddock Bay, New York, 1994. Patricia Lynne Stanko
- Habitat use and diurnal activity of the Greater Roadrunner (*Geococcyx californicus*) in Brewster County, Texas. Janice M. Hughes
- Population trends of some winter birds in Sullivan County, N. Y., 1981-1994. Joan Visconti and Valerie M. Freer
- Effects of habitat disturbance on overwinter density, condition and site tenacity of a neotropical migrant of the Yucatan Peninsula, Mexico. Daniel K. Niven
- A twenty-one year study of the Barn Owl in Northern New Jersey. Leonard J. Soucy, Jr.
- Behavioral interaction between Golden-winged and Blue-winged Warblers: Do Blue-wings dominate Golden-wings? Paul Scanlon and John Confer

- Why does Grasshopper Sparrow sing two different songs?—An experiment to test song function. W. Greg Schriver and Peter D. Vickery
- A probability-based approach for measuring spatial incidence of Barred Owl (*Strix varia*) reproduction in eastern old-growth forest. J. Christopher Haney and Charles P. Schaadt
- Microbes that live in the plumage of birds. Edward H. Burt, Jr.
- Autumn migratory movements of Northern Saw-whet Owl in the middle Atlantic states. Kevin M. Dodge, David F. Brinker and Katherine Duffy
- The winter feeding ecology of the Northern Saw-whet Owl in southern Connecticut. Kenneth E. Petit and Dwight G. Smith
- Distribution and population status of Bicknell's Thrush in the northeast. Christopher Rimmer and Jonathan Atwood
- "Owl Song"—a poetry reading by Maxwell Croydon Wheat, Jr.

At 5:00 P.M. Saturday the delegates viewed a poster session which featured the following topics:

- Redpoll invasion into the northeast: A Project Feederwatch analysis of the 1993-1994 season. Diane L. Tessaglia and Kenneth V. Rosenberg
- Effectiveness of an audiolure in increasing mist net captures of migrant Northern Saw-whet Owls. David F. Brinker and Thomas C. Erdman

During the banquet, attended by approximately 125 people, the awards previously listed were presented. In addition, the Gordon M. Meade Award for Distinguished Service was presented to Mike Peterson of the High Peaks Audubon Society. The banquet speaker was Julio de la Torre, whose presentation, "Owls of North America" was described by Don Windsor in an article in *New York Birders* as "without a doubt, the most dynamic, most spectacular, most fascinating, most spellbinding, most exciting bird presentation I have ever witnessed!" Following his talk, Mr. de la Torre led several dozen intrepid birders on an impromptu owl prowling.

Respectfully submitted,

William B. Reeves
Recording Secretary
21 April 1995

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

Ring-billed Gull Feeding on Insects Along the Eastern Lake Ontario Shoreline: Although there have been many previous reports of this activity as a rare sight in other Regions by various species of gulls in the past issues of *The Kingbird* (e.g., Sweet, P. 1993. The insect prey of the Laughing Gull. *Kingbird* 43:27), feeding on insects by Ring-billed Gull is a very common occurrence along the eastern Lake Ontario shoreline. I see it annually. It usually occurs in late summer to early fall. It occurs over extensive lakeshore wetland areas, such as the Lakeview Wildlife Management Area and Southwick Beach State Park in the town of Ellisburg in Jefferson County. The species of insect being eaten has only been identified once, when ants were actually seen in the air and floating on the water surface as they were swarming from a nest tree along the lakeshore. On most other occasions it was not possible to see any insects at all, much less the ones being eaten. However, I suspect that many times the prey is small aquatic insects such as gnats or midges hatching from the marsh and nearby environs. The altitude at which gulls normally feed on insects is about 80 to 100 feet above the marsh and well above the height of trees surrounding the marsh perimeter. Birds make repeated forays and seem to pass through a corridor area to feed. The area of feeding activity is not over the entire marsh but seems concentrated over the more heavily vegetated areas of the marsh.

At one time I suspected that dragonflies were the prey being taken. However, dragonflies would be visible with my binoculars. Whatever the gulls are catching is very small and not visible with the resolution of my binoculars or camera telephoto lens. That is why I suspect the prey is gnats, midges or other small insects. Sometimes it may be spiders parachuting in the air currents, as often occurs in the fall along the lakeshore and up to 0.5 mile inland. On some days in the fall the air above my house in Henderson hamlet, about a half mile from Lake Ontario proper but close to Stony Creek, is full of spider webs. Under these circumstances there must be thousands of spiders airborne throughout the area. The young spiders produced during the summer months use a strand of silk as a parachute to move to new habitats. It is almost impossible to see the actual spider on these web strands since they taper their body shape with feet pointed backwards to get maximum lift from the air currents as they lay out web from the spinnerets on their abdomens. But I have never been able to ascertain whether it might be spiders that the gulls are eating.

The gulls do not always fly to the prey but seem to fly through the area, spot the prey and then flare up in the air, sometimes to grasp prey in their bill. The bill is not open as they fly but opens as they flare up

and abruptly stop in the air and grasp the prey. At other times I believe the prey goes directly down the gullet with no grasping by the bill. Then swallowing motions are evident after the gull resumes regular flight.

It would seem that this feeding method would not be very efficient in terms of energy expended verses gained, but maybe it is preformed for other reasons. Perhaps the gulls cannot resist the food items or the sheer numbers causes an automatic feeding response by the gulls. I have seen large numbers of Ring-billed Gull over Henderson during the summer months responding in much the same manner and have noted small gnats or flies hatching from the lawn at this time. The insects are particularly visible when the sun is low to the horizon at sunset and they can be seen better. Chimney Swift, Purple Martin and swallows in the area also take advantage of this bounty of protein, but their smaller body mass seems better matched to this abundant food supply compared to a bird as large as Ring-billed Gull.

Lee B. Chamberlaine, P.O. Box 139, Henderson, New York 13650

An Aerial Feeding Flock of Ring-billed Gull: On 7 September 1991 at about 6 PM, a large flock of Ring-billed Gull (*Larus delawarensis*) entered Weesuck Creek, an estuary in the northwestern corner of Shinnecock Bay on the south shore of Long Island, Town of Southampton, Suffolk County. It was a group of 100-120 birds behaving more or less like a flock of migrating swallows, turning, wheeling, and twisting around the wide mouth of the creek, mostly over the water but also over the salt marsh edges on both banks. These gyrations suggested more than just casual exercise and, as the wheeling flock came closer, I was able to observe that these birds were hawking insects. The air was filled with small mosquitoes or midges and the birds were catching them like so many swallows or nighthawks. The sudden darting twists and the ability to twist or extend the neck in order to scoop up the prey revealed quite a bit of aerial skill for a medium large gull of this type. I could not see the actual mechanism of capture very well but I did not observe bill snapping. Rather, the method appeared to emulate the basic swallow, swift or nightjar open-bill gathering technique. Perhaps the more apt comparison might be with Forster's or Black Terns, which regularly feed on flying insects and in an apparently similar manner. In my experience, this flocking behavior is unusual and distinctive and I have seen it on Long Island only a few times in the past. Lauro (*Kingbird* 27:87-88; 1977) reported a similar phenomenon that took place on 13 September 1976, when a mixed flock of Ring-billed, Herring, and Laughing Gulls was observed feeding on swarming *Lasius* ants on Jones Beach, Long Island.
Eric Salzman, Box 775, East Quogue, New York 11942

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WINTER SEASON

ROBERT SPAHN

The Winter of 1994-95 was almost a rerun of the winter of 1992-93. December and January were mild and nearly snow free, this time lacking even the nor'easter which hit Regions 9 and 10 in December 1992. Water was open most of the season and similar discussions revolved around the impact of this openness on waterfowl: were waterfowl scarce or just dispersed because of the extensive open water available? Avian variety was good. As in 1992-93, there was a great variety of half-hardy species and irruptive species and winter finches were largely absent. This season, in contrast with 1992-93, the wild food crop was noted as excellent although any effects of this difference were not obvious. In both seasons, February turned very cold and wintry, with a major storm experienced by all on 4-5 Feb and with Regions 1 and 7 receiving significant snow through the balance of the season while most of the rest of the State continued relatively free of the white stuff. The cold drastically curtailed the normal influx of early migrants in late February. Average temperatures and precipitation by month were remarkably uniform across the State for the Regions reporting the data.

Water bird reports produced great contrasts. The loon migration continued well into December, with Red-throated outnumbering Common in Region 2 and persisting well into January; a good push of Common Loon was noted in Region 3 on 10 Dec. The grebe incursion and grounding of last winter was not even echoed this year, with numbers of all species relatively low. *Northern Gannet* was noted in Regions 2, 8, 9, and 10, and an *American White Pelican* was again recorded in Region 10. A pelagic trip on 3 Dec found species thought to be rare in the State at this season, including Greater, Sooty, and Manx Shearwaters, Red Phalarope, and Dovekie. Heron and egret reports were amazingly scarce, but it is difficult to tell whether their absence means there were too few or too many reports to rate mention in Regions 9 and 10. Waterfowl variety was excellent, but counts were generally mediocre, with a few notable exceptions. Highlights for this group include high Tundra Swan counts in Regions 1, 3, and 5; Greater White-fronted Goose in Regions 3, 9, and 10; exceptional winter counts for Snow Goose in Regions 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8; poor Wood Duck counts; a record high winter Mallard count in Region 3; half-hardy dabbling ducks widespread on CBCs and the January Waterfowl Count; a record high inland tally of Greater Scaup in Region 2; very high counts of

Common Eider in Region 10; Harlequin Duck in Region 1, 2, 5, and 10; Oldsquaw and White-winged Scoter both scarce, but Surf Scoter up a bit for the season; Barrow's Goldeneye in Regions 7, 8, and 9; and Common Merganser numbers good in several Regions, especially Region 5.

Raptors also produced mixed reviews. Numbers were high in some Regions, but down in neighboring Regions, e.g., Rough-legged Hawk counts high in Regions 3 and 4 but low in Regions 1 and 2, and unremarkable elsewhere. There are many noteworthy observations: Turkey Vulture continues to increase its winter presence, with reports from six Regions, including Region 10, and *Black Vulture* again wintered in Region 9. Bald Eagle was noted in all Regions reporting, with an amazing record high count from Region 9. Accipiters were noted in average numbers. Red-shouldered Hawk reports were up a bit, with records from six Regions. Broad-winged Hawk was found in Region 10 and Osprey in Regions 4 and 10. Golden Eagle was noted from Regions 4, 7, 8, and 9, where it is rare in winter. Merlin, formerly considered rare in winter away from the coast was located in seven inland Regions. Peregrine Falcon was observed in Regions 1, 2, 8, and 9. Gyrfalcon was noted in Regions 1 and 7, the former bird seen fairly regularly through the season. Owls were much better reported this season than usual. Variety was excellent across most Regions, though numbers were still low. This was not an invasion year for Snowy Owl, though birds were reported in eight of the nine Regions reporting. Barred Owl was reported from seven Regions and Long-eared Owl from five. Short-eared Owl was noted in eight Regions, with good counts from Regions 3, 8, and 9 and a very high count from Region 7. Northern Saw-whet Owl was tallied in six Regions and a lone *Boreal Owl* was heard in Region 4.

Given the open winter, shorebirds were a disappointment. Variety was good in Region 10 and fair in Region 9, with most of the expected wintering species recorded. Elsewhere, variety of species and numbers were very poor. Even Killdeer and Common Snipe were sparsely reported on CBCs. As usual, this group still had its highlights, with a persistent *Northern Lapwing* in Region 10; Ruddy Turnstone in Region 9; a high count of Western Sandpiper in Region 10; and late dowitcher in Regions 2 and 10. Wintering gulls also were generally unexceptional, but still provided some excellent records, including a good collection of the expected rarities in Region 10; *California Gull* at Niagara Falls for a third consecutive winter; *Thayer's Gull* reported from Regions 1, 2, 5, and 8; Lesser Black-backed Gull in six Regions; both Iceland and Glaucous Gulls in seven Regions; a *Ross's Gull* in Region 3; and a

record high for Black-legged Kittiwake at sea in Region 10. As in the winter of 1992-93, the usual upstate concentrations of Bonaparte's and Little Gulls were dramatically reduced in numbers and length of stay this winter relative to the past 20 years. The lone tern report was a very late Forster's Tern in Region 9, as was a Black Skimmer in Region 10.

The passerines are a bit difficult to organize, but the basic stories are the large number, over 35, of half-hardy species and few irruptive species were conspicuous. With a few exceptions, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Northern Shrike, Bohemian Waxwing, American Tree Sparrow, Lapland Longspur and Snow Bunting all were found in relatively low numbers or were absent. Winter finches generally were very scarce, except for a crossbill invasion centered in Region 7 and spilling over to Regions 5 and 8, though most species were recorded somewhere in at least very low numbers. A few other interesting notes include Common Raven from six Regions; Fish Crow inland in Regions 3, 8, and 9, with a late winter double-digit count in Region 8; Black-capped Chickadee invaded Region 9 but was nearly absent at the Jenny Lake study area in Region 8; Carolina Wren numbers down, as expected, except for a record high CBC count from the coldest part of Region 2; a *Loggerhead Shrike* in Region 4; generally low counts for White-throated and White-crowned Sparrows and Dark-eyed Junco; an Oregon type Dark-eyed Junco in Region 8, and blackbird numbers very low, with the only large roost counts being thousands of Common Grackle in Region 10.

Half-hardy species were so prevalent that only the special highlights will be mentioned here. These include Eastern Phoebe in Regions 1, 8, 9, and 10; House Wren in Region 9; *Wood Thrush* in Region 10; American Robin everywhere, with roost counts in the thousands in Regions 2 and 8; 13 species of warblers, the most unusual *Nashville* in Regions 9 and 10, *Yellow-throated* in Region 3, *Prairie* in Region 10, *Palm* in Regions 9 and 10, *Wilson's* in Regions 9 and 10, *American Redstart* in Region 10, and *Northern Waterthrush* in Regions 9 and 10. Rose-breasted Grosbeak tarried in Region 4, Dickcissel in Regions 9 and 10; Vesper Sparrow in Region 2; Lark Sparrow in Region 10; Savannah and Fox Sparrows in Regions 1, 2, 8, and 9; and Lincoln's Sparrow in Region 10.

The similarity this season to the winter of 1992-93 in the lists of half-hardy species, of the lingering eastern migratory species, and of passerine rarities such as *Loggerhead Shrike*, *Dickcissel*, and *Harris's Sparrow*, and the fact that crossbills were virtually the only winter finches present is striking. Before you begin to see some periodicity in these events, read *Chaos* by Robert Gleick to learn that "stable" pseudo-periodicity is typical of systems driven by a set of nonlinear drivers, and

in which a very small change in any factor driving such a system can push it to an entirely new, inherently unpredictable state, which again may be relatively stable and show some other apparent periodicity.

Other noteworthy reports including the continuing decrease in Ring-necked Pheasant and increase for Wild Turkey, with flocks of the latter at 200+ in Regions 4 and 5; the usual few wintering rails; a very high tally of American Coot in Region 2; *Sandhill Crane* in Regions 2, 5, and 10; alcids in Region 10, including both Thick-billed and *Common Murre* and a good count of Razorbill. Observers found good counts of Red-headed and Red-bellied Woodpeckers, a Black-backed Woodpecker in Region 9 as well as the expected Region 7 reports, and good CBC counts for Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and Northern Flicker.

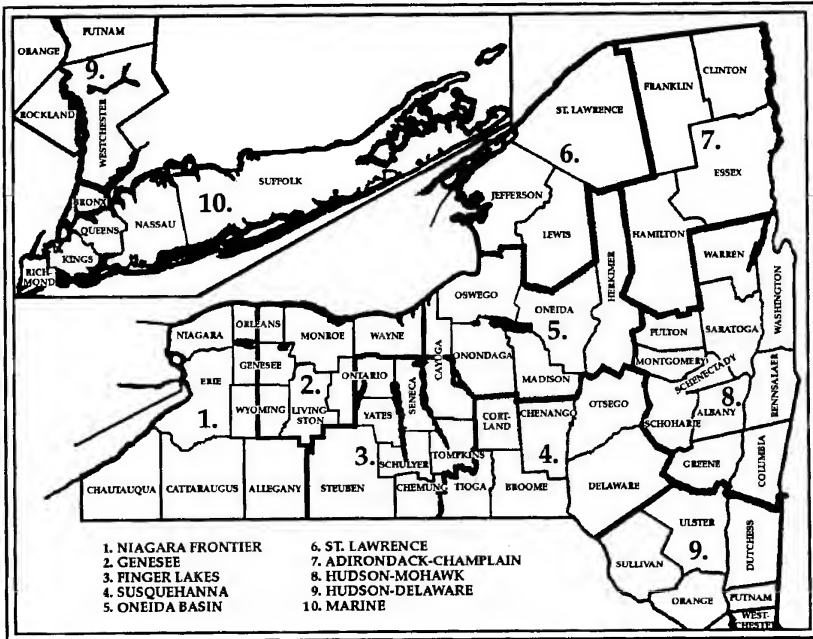
In addition to the litany of species data, there are always interesting notes in the Regional reports. A few which caught my eye were notes on raptor rehabilitation in Region 5; American Robin and Cedar Waxwing persisting at higher altitudes in Region 7; and an host of exotic gulls that escaped from the Bronx Zoo Aviary after a roof collapse, not to be seen subsequently.

The final detail is the selection of the B.O.T.S. Many rarities have been woven in the summary above, and *Townsend's Solitaire* in Regions 9 and 10; and *Harris's Sparrow* in Regions 2 and 9 normally would be strong candidates. However, this season the award goes to the obliging *Northern Lapwing* ogled by many in Region 10.

716 High Tower Way, Webster, New York 14580

Standard abbreviations: Regional rarities appear in *bold italics*; county names are shortened to their first four letters and appear in Upper Case letters; months are shortened to their first three letters. **In species accounts:** number of individuals omitted implies that one individual was reported; ! — details seen by Regional Editor; ad — adult; Alt — Alternate plumage; Am. — American; arr — arrival or first of season; CBC — Christmas Bird Count; Com. — Common; E. — Eastern; I — Island; imm — immature; *intro* — see introduction to report; juv — juvenile; L — Lake; max — maximum; mob — multiple observers; N. — Northern; NWR — National Wildlife Refuge; NYSARC — report to New York State Avian Records Committee; P — Park; Pd — Pond; ph — photographed; Pt — Point; Res — Reservoir; SP — State Park; spm — specimen; T — Town of; Twn — township; W. — Western; WMA — Wildlife Management Area; y — young.

REPORTING REGIONS



Regional boundaries coincide with county lines, *except at:*

Region 1-Region 2 in Orleans, Genesee and Wyoming Counties: the boundary is NY Route 98 from Pt. Breeze to Batavia, NY Route 63 from Batavia to Pavilion, and NY Route 19 from Pavilion to the Allegany County line.

Region 2-Region 3 in Ontario County: the boundary is Mud Creek to NY Route 64, NY Route 64 from Bristol Center to S. Bristol Springs, and Route 21 from S. Bristol Springs to the Yates County line.

Region 3-Region 5 in Cayuga County: the boundary is NY Route 31.

REPORTING DEADLINES

Winter Season: December, January, February

Deadline is 7 March

Spring Season: March, April, May

Deadline is 7 June

Summer Season: June, July, August

Deadline is 7 September

Fall Season: September, October, November

Deadline is 7 December

REGION 1 — NIAGARA FRONTIER

WILLIE D'ANNA

The weather in December and January was greatly affected by El Niño, the Pacific Ocean event that split the jet stream and kept arctic air to our north. December, like the November preceding it, was particularly quiet with temperatures 5°F above normal and precipitation an inch below normal at 2.67 inches. Winds for the month were the lightest on record at Buffalo and it was also much sunnier than normal. Eight inches of snowfall in Buffalo and 10 inches in the snowbelts south of the city were far below monthly averages of 24 and 60 inches, respectively. January is when Lake Erie usually becomes its notorious self. This year it had to struggle with El Niño for control of our weather. It managed to dump a foot of snow in Buffalo on 3 Jan, after leaving nearly twice that in the snowbelts the day before. This was the heaviest one day snowfall in January in ten years. However, the period from 12 to 21 Jan averaged more than 20° above normal with record high temperatures recorded on 14 and 15 Jan, while the final days of the month saw seasonal temperatures and only light snowfall. For the month, temperatures averaged nearly 6° above normal while the snowfall total was about average. At Amity Lake ALLE, the temperature from mid Dec to mid Jan averaged 34°F compared to 17°F for the same period last year (VP). Residents of our Region were hopeful that the mild open winter would continue and then translate into an early spring. Besides the weather, birders were enjoying the gulls on the Niagara River and a good number of half-hardy species. Unfortunately, February was just January with another name. Mainly lake effect snows dumped 35 inches of the white stuff, making it the snowiest February in 35 years. Temperatures averaged 2.6° below normal with generally strong winds making for bitter cold conditions. To illustrate the effect that the weather change had on the birds are Gordon Bellerby's counts of Bonaparte's Gull as they flew out the mouth of the Niagara River to roost on Lake Ontario: 16,500 on 3 Feb, a February record, and none on 6 Feb!

The nine Christmas Bird Counts in our Region, compiled by Gerry Rising, were very close to the previous two years in total individuals (116,253) and species (106). Species with highest counts compared to their average over the past five years were Red-throated Loon, Tundra Swan, Canada Goose, Common Goldeneye, Common Merganser, Brown

Creeper, American Robin, Cedar Waxwing, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and Rufous-sided Towhee. Most of these continued in above average numbers through the rest of the winter. Low counts were obtained for Great Blue Heron, Redhead, Greater Scaup, Cooper's Hawk, Ring-necked Pheasant, Ring-billed and Herring Gulls, Rock and Mourning Doves, Eastern Screech-, Great Horned, Barred, and Short-eared Owls, Belted Kingfisher, Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Carolina Wren, Northern Mockingbird, Northern Shrike, Northern Cardinal, White-crowned Sparrow, Snow Bunting, Pine Siskin, and American Goldfinch. It is difficult to make absolute statements about this data. However, declines in Ring-necked Pheasant have been indicated previously, and that this is the third count during the past 12 months with low totals for Great Horned Owl. Perhaps the unrelenting development is even taking its toll on this adaptable species.

Last winter's grebe fallout was not repeated. This season not even one Red-necked Grebe was reported. Unusually high numbers of Tundra Swan and American Coot were evident on the Niagara River, Lake Erie, and Chautauqua Lake, an effect of the mild winter. Three Harlequin Duck was a great showing with a handsome pair cooperating for birders at Buffalo.

Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawk were found in good numbers, most at feeding stations, particularly in February. Age in adult birds is rarely documented. Thus, it is pleasing to report three cases of raptors returning to the region. At Buffalo Harbor a *Gyr Falcon* was back for its third winter and birders managed to see it several times unlike previous years when it could be found only sporadically. A Merlin returned to the University of Buffalo's Main Street campus for the fifth year, although it was only encountered the first few days of January. Finally, a sub-adult Bald Eagle with a green wing-tag, recorded on the lower Niagara River in Jan 1986, has been seen almost every year since, making it at least 11 years old!

Of the passerines, Tufted Titmouse continues to do well while another southerner, Carolina Wren, is at a low point of its cycle after peaking two to three years ago. Eastern Bluebird was well reported from many areas and American Robin was incredibly numerous, even abundant at times. One flock near East Aurora on 1 Jan contained 650 birds (MM), the second highest winter count ever. It was also noted in high numbers in ALLE (VP), as well as the lake plains where high counts are less unusual. Another berry eater, Cedar Waxwing, was also noted in good numbers. Also interested in the birds eating these berries were the many Northern Shrike reported. Winter finches were practically absent

all winter. Purple Finch, however, was reported in good numbers, especially in the hillier counties of WYOM, ALLE, and CATT.

Unusual sightings this season included Peregrine Falcon, *California Gull* for the third year in a row, Marsh Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Savannah Sparrow for the third straight winter, Fox Sparrow, and the first ever Jan record for *Eastern Phoebe*.

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Abbreviations: BH - Buffalo Harbor; BISP - Buckhorn I SP; DH - Dunkirk Harbor; INWR - Iroquois NWR; NF - Niagara Falls; NR - Niagara River.

Winter reports: **Red-throated Loon:** max 11 T Porter 27 Dec (BE, WD); Fort Niagara SP 7 Jan (MM); T Newfane 15 Jan (WBr); rare after Dec. **Com. Loon:** only reports after Dec NF 1 Jan, T Wilson 4 Feb. **Pied-billed Grebe:** up to six DH all season. **Horned Grebe:** four Golden Hill SP 23 Jan (WD); only report after Dec. **Red-necked Grebe:** none. **Double-crested Cormorant:** max 16 DH 22 Feb (RS). **Great Blue Heron:** max 19 Strawberry I NR 21 Jan (WW). **Black-crowned Night-Heron:** DH 3 Jan (JG,AB), 5 Feb (TM), only report. **Tundra Swan:** 68 CBCs; max 45 over Jamestown 18 Jan (RS), 31 BISP 18 Feb (BC). **Mute Swan:** DH 29 Jan (WBr), only report. **Wood Duck:** 20 CBCs; 1, 2 Celoron CHAU 5, 18 Jan (RS), rare after Dec. **N. Pintail:** max 10 BISP 24 Dec (BC). **Gadwall:** max 33 INWR 10 Dec (WW). **Am. Wigeon:** T Amity 28 Feb (VP), wintering or first arrival? **Redhead:** max 138 upper NR 19 Feb (WW). **Ring-necked Duck:** max 25 T Wheatfield 17 Jan (RA,JT). **Greater Scaup:** max 2750 BH 30 Jan (MD), high count. **Harlequin Duck:** imm male Four Mile Creek SP 27 Dec (WD, DD); ad male Buffalo-NR 14 Jan-2 Feb (RV, MT), female 30 Jan-19 Feb. **Surf Scoter:** three T Ellery 1 Dec (RS); mouth of NR 13-22 Jan (GB, WD!); NF 14 Jan (WD!, BP); Buffalo 17, 25 Jan (RA, MD); DH 11,

17 Feb (RS, FR); more than usual. **Hooded Merganser**: six reports involving 20 birds in Jan, more than usual. **Ruddy Duck**: only reports two T Dayton 10 Dec (BS), DH 16 Jan (FR,AH).

Turkey Vulture: Youngstown, NIAG 3 Dec (WBr!), record late. **Bald Eagle**: intro. N. Goshawk: St. Bonaventure CBC CATT 17 Dec; ad T Wethersfield 12,13 Dec (DJ, MJ). **Red-shouldered Hawk**: four CBCs, only report. **Rough-legged Hawk**: low numbers in southern tier, fewer on the L Ontario Plain. **Merlin**: one Buffalo early Jan (ES!, DS!). **Peregrine Falcon**: Dunkirk 18 Jan (FR!). **Gyrffalcon**: ad gray morph Buffalo Harbor after 23 Dec (MM!, mob). **Ring-necked Pheasant**: scarce. **Am. Coot**: 59 LaSalle P Buffalo 24 Dec (WW); Jan record max 232 DH 16 Jan (FR,AH); Feb record max 184 there 22 Feb (RS). **Purple Sandpiper**: three NF 3 Dec (MM); five Goat I NR 22 Jan (MD); only reports. **Dunlin**: last three NF 10 Dec (WD). **Com. Snipe**: Jamestown CBC 18 Dec, only report. **Little Gull**: max 11 mouth of NR 29 Jan (GB); several at Buffalo, NF, and Lewiston on NR, usually mainly confined to lower NR after Dec. **Bonaparte's Gull**: record Jan max 16,200 mouth of NR 29 Jan (GB); intro. **Ring-billed Gull**: "few thousand" NR Buffalo in Feb; low counts. **California Gull**: second-winter plumage RMPP 3 Dec (RF!, NF!, mob). **Thayer's Gull**: at least six different birds NF and RMPP Dec and Jan. **Iceland Gull**: at least ten NF and RMPP; DH 5 Feb (TM, LN), only report away from NR. **Lesser Black-backed Gull**: at least five birds on the NR in Dec; three RMPP 28 Jan (WD!), ad and imm NF 30 Jan (WD!), usually departs after early Jan. **Glaucous Gull**: max five NF 28 Jan (MM); Golden Hill SP 22 Jan (D&DS), only report away from NR. **Great Black-backed Gull**: 490 NF 30 Jan (WD), large count.

Snowy Owl: T Java 23 Dec (MJ); T Arcade 31 Dec to 18 Jan (DJ, MJ, HL, LH); Bird I Pier Buffalo 6 Jan (PY); T Arkwright in Jan; only reports. **Long-eared Owl**: 13 five locations NIAG, only report. **Short-eared Owl**: Kuckville ORLE 22 Dec (BE); 2, 1 T Porter 27 Dec, 2 Jan; only reports. **Red-headed Woodpecker**: Fort Niagara SP 4, 27 Dec, 1 Jan (WD, WBr). **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**: Bond L P NIAG 24-27 Dec (WD, DB); Chestnut Ridge CBC 1 Jan; rare in winter. **N. Flicker**: eight T Yates 23 Jan (WD, BP), good winter tally. **Pileated Woodpecker**: 6-7 Allegany SP 19 Feb (PY), good count.

E. Phoebe: T Eden 1 Jan (DH!, DM). **Horned Lark**: max 150 *alpestris* 23 Jan. **Am. Crow**: 2000 Buffalo 16 Jan (WBr), impressive. **Com. Raven**: T Amity 19 Feb (VP!), only report. **Carolina Wren**: four reports. **Winter Wren**: Williamsville Glen ERIE 14 Dec (PY); BISP 12 Jan, 18 Feb (BC). **Marsh Wren**: Tonawanda WMA 24 Dec (PY!), very rare in winter. **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**: Four Mile Creek SP 13 Feb (WD!, BP); rare in winter. **Hermit Thrush**: T Portville 17 Dec (BS), only report. **Am. Robin**: very

numerous. **Gray Catbird**: T Portville 17 Dec (BS); N. Tonawanda NIAG 18 Dec (BP); only reports. **Cedar Waxwing**: max 1589 CBCs, an excellent total; counts of 100+ ORLE, WYOM. **N. Shrike**: particularly numerous on L Ontario plain.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: record max 32 Bond L P NIAG 24 Dec (WD), previous winter high 31 in 1980; up to five reported from each of seven other locations, impressive showing.

Savannah Sparrow: T Pomfret 24 Jan (TM!). **Fox Sparrow**: Jamestown CBC 18 Dec, very late. **Swamp Sparrow**: E. Aurora 1 Dec to 11 Jan (LH); Tonawanda WMA 24 Dec (PY); 1, 2 BISP 12,29 Jan (BC,D&DS); a good showing. **White-crowned Sparrow**: only reports two Chestnut Ridge CBC 1 Jan; six T Pomfret 5 Feb (TM). **Lapland Longspur**: 4, 7+ T Somerset 23 Jan, 26 Feb (WD). **Snow Bunting**: max 110 BH 25 Dec, 150 T Somerset 31 Jan, few other reports. **Red-winged Blackbird**: max 92 CBCs; six reports through. **Rusty Blackbird**: 29 T Conewango 10 Dec (BS); two T Lewiston 27 Dec (DB); T Pomfret 22 Jan (TM); a good showing. **Com. Grackle**: Tonawanda ERIE 27 Jan (WW); two T Tonawanda 31 Jan, 22 Feb (WW,PH); two T Pomfret 19 Feb (TM), rare after Dec. **Purple Finch**: max 8-30 Warsaw WYOM 1-28 Feb (HK); *intro*. **Pine Siskin**: eight CBCs; Bond L P NIAG 24 Dec (WD); Wellsville ALLE 1-31 Jan (MB); T Amity 14 Jan (VP); only reports. **Evening Grosbeak**: 30 down to 1 Beaver Meadow Wildlife Refuge WYOM 17-21 Dec (DJ), only report!

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REGION 2 — GENESEE

KEVIN C. GRIFFITH

You might not even have called it winter. That made some folks happy but others weren't so pleased. December's temperatures averaged above normal and precipitation was below average at 2.66 inches. Snowfall was well below average. It was cold enough though to freeze some bodies of water for the Christmas Bird Counts. January continued the warm trend but precipitation was up at 2.46 inches, 0.45 inches above normal. Again snowfall was minimal. By the end of the month we were two feet in arrears. It wasn't until February that we finally saw winter. Temperatures were cold and we saw some snow. Overall precipitation was down at 1.6 inches but snowfall was about an inch above normal.

Several factors combined for a pretty good winter season for birding. Many observers noted the excellent wild food crop. The CBCs always are a plus, but recently a number of birders have scoured the area for a big January list. Their constant efforts turned up some good birds. Combine that with the mild conditions and the season looked pretty good. The only setbacks were the snowy, messy days of February.

It was quite a winter for loons. Both Red-throated and Common Loon were reported into February, with Red-throated often the more numerous of the two. This pattern did correlate with our totals from the fall. Waterfowl variety was excellent. The usual species were present, with good totals of some species. Dabbling duck totals were slightly higher than usual. Oldsquaw and White-winged Scoter were present in somewhat reduced numbers. It is possible that they wintered farther out on the lake than usual due to the mild conditions and were hard to spot. There were times when good numbers were reported. Both Black and Surf Scoter were found during the season, when they can be tough to locate. Massive flocks of Greater Scaup, numbering into the thousands, were a highlight.

The highlight of the winter season for raptors was the increased reports of Merlin and Peregrine Falcon. Both species are rare here in winter but reports were frequent this season. The Peregrine Release Project may have contributed to the total, but not all birds were marked as the released birds were and adults, which could not have been released birds, were reported. Other raptors were about normal, with few reports of Rough-legged Hawk. The owl picture was somewhat

mixed. Short-eared Owl was numerous in the Retsof area but was scarce elsewhere. The big January push produced reports of most of the owls, including Long-eared and N. Saw-whet Owls. There were scattered reports of Snowy Owl, but few lingered.

A *Sandhill Crane* report in December was a first winter record for the Region. It may be related to the late fall reports from Region 3. Observers also commented on the large numbers of American Coot. There was no repeat of last year's shorebird invasion. The only lingering bird was a dowitcher, and Killdeer was missed in January for the first time in many years. The usual gull concentrations were also lacking. The usual species were recorded, but the concentrations of Bonaparte's Gull off Durand-Eastman Park never materialized. Lesser Black-backed Gull and *Thayer's Gull* were the highlights. Even the white-winged gulls appeared late.

Passerine reports were characterized by variety. Positives included the many half hardy-species reported. The American Robin roost at Mendon Ponds peaked in the thousands, and they were accompanied by small numbers of blackbirds. Three warbler species were reported in January and the sparrow totals were the best ever with 14 species reported. White-crowned Sparrow numbers were very good. Negatives included continued low numbers of Carolina Wren and American Tree Sparrow numbers seemed down a bit as were Snow Bunting and Lapland Longspur.

Rarities for the season included *Northern Gannet*, *Common Eider*, Harlequin Duck, *Sandhill Crane*, *Thayer's Gull*, Lesser Black-backed Gull, *Orange-crowned Warbler*, *Harris's Sparrow*.

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Abbreviations: BS - Bergen Swamp; DEP - Durand-Eastman Park, Rochester; HBSP - Hamlin Beach State Park; IB - Irondequoit Bay; MPdP - Mendon Ponds Park.

Winter reports: **Red-throated Loon:** max 220 HBSP 2 Dec (CC), great year for this species. **Com. Loon:** max 4 IB 7 Jan, low. **Red-necked Grebe:** one HBSP 1, 14 Dec. **N. Gannet:** one HBSP 11 Dec (WS). **Double-crested Cormorant:** last Greece 11 Dec. **Great Blue Heron:** max seven Greece 4 Feb. **Snow Goose:** one York 21 Dec (DT), uncommon in winter. **Greater Scaup:** max 25,000 Greece 1 Jan. **Com. Eider:** one Oklahoma Beach 18 Dec (D&DT, CG). **Oldsquaw:** max 2700 DEP 18 Dec. **Harlequin Duck:** male at HBSP 10 Jan (WS); male Sodus Bay 17-18 Jan (D&DT). **Black Scoter:** max 40 Sodus 29 Dec. **Bufflehead:** max 300 IB 24 Dec (TM), good total. **Hooded Merganser:** max 115 Conesus L 3 Dec. **Com. Merganser:** max 1200 Greece 10 Dec. **Ruddy Duck:** max eight Conesus L 22 Jan.

Turkey Vulture: one Lima 24 Feb. **Bald Eagle:** one Webster 24 Dec. **N. Goshawk:** one Brockport 3 Dec, one Greece 26 Feb. **Merlin:** one report Dec, four reports Jan. **Peregrine Falcon:** one report Dec, five reports Jan. **Ruffed Grouse:** max 12 Springwater 1-15 Dec (HH). **Virginia Rail:** one MPdP 9, 28 Jan (DT), only reports. **Sora:** one MPdP 9 Jan (DT), only report. **Com. Moorhen:** last Greece 18 Dec (KG). late. **Am. Coot:** max 651 Rochester CBC 18 Dec. **Sandhill Crane:** one Braddock Bay 10 Dec (KG), first winter record. **Killdeer:** last Greece 18 Dec, scarce. **Com. Snipe:** last Brighton 28 Dec (DT), scarce. **Am. Woodcock:** one Hilton 10 Jan (DT), very unusual. **Little Gull:** one DEP 13 Dec (CC), one HBSP 19 Jan (DT), scarce. **Thayer's Gull:** one IB 14 Jan (SSk, BM). **Lesser Black-backed Gull:** third winter bird IB 22 Jan (D&DT). **Iceland Gull:** imm HBSP 13 Dec; imm IB 24 Dec. **Glaucous Gull:** arr Greece 20 Jan.

Barred Owl: one BS 1 Jan, only report. **Long-eared Owl:** one DEP 3 Dec (GC), one Canadice L 26 Dec (CC, NM), unusual in winter. **Short-eared Owl:** max 12 Retsof 2 Jan. **N. Saw-whet Owl:** one Penfield 4 Dec (RMc), one BS 1 Jan (DT), one Manitou 18 Feb (KW), unusual in winter. **Red-headed Woodpecker:** max six Avon 1-31 Dec. **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** one Irondequoit 1-16, 25-28 Feb (GL).

Winter Wren: max two DEP 24-31 Dec. **Marsh Wren:** one Sodus 28 Dec, 1 Jan (DS, GC, DT), uncommon. **Ruby-crowned Kinglet:** one DEP 29 Dec (GC), one DEP 16 Jan (DT), probably the same bird, very unusual in winter. **Hermit Thrush:** one Canadice L 26 Dec; two Webster P 2 Jan. **Gray Catbird:** max three various 18 Dec; four Jan, one Feb reports. **Am. Pipit:** one Manitou 3, 12 Dec (RO'H), very late. **Cedar Waxwing:** max 500 HBSP 1 Dec.

Orange-crowned Warbler: one DEP 20 Dec (GC), relocated in January (mob). **Yellow-rumped Warbler:** max 25 Caledonia 29 Jan.

Com. Yellowthroat: one Greece 18 Dec (RM), one MPdP 27 Dec (KD), one Greece 22 Jan, uncommon.

Rufous-sided Towhee: singles DEP 20 Dec (GC), Conesus L 26 Dec, DEP 2 Jan, HBSP 27 Jan, unusual in winter. **Chipping Sparrow:** one Avon 7 Jan (DT), one Honeoye Falls 21 Feb (K&JF), unusual in winter. **Field Sparrow:** one Avon 7, 10, 24 Jan (mob), unusual in winter. **Vesper Sparrow:** one Sodus 14 Jan (D &DT), very unusual in winter. **Savannah Sparrow:** one Geneseo 28 Jan (SS), unusual in winter. **Fox Sparrow:** max two Webster 13 Jan. **White-crowned Sparrow:** one HBSP 6-31 Dec (H & DL), max 25 Avon 14 Jan, one of the best years ever for this species. **Harris's Sparrow:** one Kreutter residence near Perry 10 Dec into January. **Snow Bunting:** max 3000 Kendall 13 Jan, good total for an off year. **E. Meadowlark:** one Kendall 13 Jan, only report. **Rusty Blackbird:** one reported in Jan. **Red Crossbill:** max 13 IB 18 Dec (MR). **Pine Siskin:** one Webster 13 Dec, scarce. **Evening Grosbeak:** one Greece 4 Dec, one HBSP 22 Jan, scarce.

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REGION 3 — FINGER LAKES

STEVE KELLING

Winter conditions during the past season in the Finger Lakes were considerably milder than those of the previous year. Temperatures remained above or near normal and precipitation was below normal. To most this was a welcome relief from the past two winters. December's weather was a continuance of November's. Temperatures were 5°F above normal, the eighth warmest December on record, and precipitation was slightly below normal. There were no significant weather events in our region until 29 Dec, when strong, blustery northerly winds prevailed. Unfortunately, this also was the day when Watkins Glen had their Christmas Bird Count. January's weather conditions made people wonder if winter was ever going to arrive in the Finger Lakes. Average temperatures were 8°F above normal, the ninth warmest on record. While precipitation was near normal, snowfall was 10 inches below normal. Smaller Regional lakes remained open and most fields lacked significant snow cover. February finally brought a return to more seasonable weather conditions. Interestingly, February's

-2°F departure from normal temperatures was the largest negative temperature departure since May 1994. The only significant storm that passed through the Region was on 4 Feb, and precipitation for the month was around an inch below normal. Snow cover varied widely across the Finger Lakes, and was between 1 and 24 inches for the period.

The Fall migration of waterfowl continued into December. Common Loon, whose migration typically ends around Thanksgiving, continued moving until 10 Dec, when Bill Evans recorded over 200 heading south down Cayuga Lake. Ruddy Duck and Northern Pintail were also seen in unusually high numbers and very late. Canada Goose numbers were down by a third on Cayuga Lake during the Federation's Waterfowl census, but numbers were up in areas away from the lakes. This may have been due to the lack of ice or snow cover in the area. Mallard populations exploded in the Region in January. Estimates of up to 50,000 Mallard were made by several observers in the Region. Tundra Swan also overwintered in unusually high numbers on the north end of Cayuga Lake.

The mild weather of the past winter provided the flavor for the bird sightings as did the brutal weather of the previous year. Instead of being invaded by grebes and winter finches as we were last year, many half-hardy species such as Field, Song, Swamp and Savannah Sparrows remained in impressive numbers in the Region. Christmas Bird Counts in Ithaca and the Chemung Valley reported high numbers of both individuals and species. The Chemung Valley Audubon Society reported record numbers of Canada Goose, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, and Ring-billed Gull and reported their first ever Common Raven. Ithaca reported record numbers of American Coot, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Red-bellied Woodpecker, American Robin, European Starling, and Rusty Blackbird and recorded their first ever Greater White-fronted Goose.

The numbers of overwintering raptors were much higher than the previous year. Northern Harrier, Rough-legged Hawk and Red-tailed Hawk were reported in high numbers throughout the Region. Merlin, a falcon which typically passes through our Region in September and October, was reported from three locations in late December and early January. Short-eared Owl returned to the Region in numbers that have not been observed for several years.

The typically scattered reports of Iceland, Glaucous, and Lesser Black-backed Gulls were enhanced by the report by a *Ross's Gull*, which despite an intense effort by numerous individuals was only observed by one person.

Several warbler species were reported. In particular, a *Yellow-throated Warbler* was observed at an Ithaca feeder for several days in early December. A Pine Warbler also overwintered at a feeder in Freeville, and Common Yellowthroat remained in the area into January. Yellow-rumped Warbler were scattered throughout the Cayuga Lake Basin.

A total of 116 species were seen during the winter season in the Finger Lakes. Highlights of the season were Red-throated Loon, Greater White-fronted Goose, **Merlin**, **Ross's Gull**, Iceland Gull, Glaucous Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, and *Yellow-throated Warbler*.

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Abbreviations: AB - Aurora Bay, Cayuga Lake; CL - Cayuga Lake; CLB - Cayuga Lake Basin; CLFWC - Cayuga Lake Federation Waterfowl Count, 22 Jan; CV - Chemung Valley; CVCBC - Chemung Valley Christmas Bird Count, 30 Dec; EL - Elmira; GE - Geneva; ICBC - Ithaca Christmas Bird Count, 1 Jan; KF - King's Ferry; MNWR - Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge; MPt - Myers Point, Lansing; StP - Stewart Park, Ithaca; SL - Seneca Lake; SSLFWC - South Seneca Lake Federation Waterfowl Count, 15 Jan; US - Union Springs; WG - Watkins Glen; WGCBC - Watkins Glen Christmas Bird Count, 29 Dec.

Winter reports: **Com. Loon:** 200 MPt 10 Dec (BE); singles SL, CL entire period. **Red-throated Loon:** two MPt 20 Dec (CD); one StP 1 Jan-22 Jan. **Pied-billed Grebe:** overwintered SL, CL. **Horned Grebe:** overwintered SL, CL; max 11 AB 21 Jan. **Double-crested Cormorant:** last WG 1 Dec. **Great Blue Heron:** overwintered CL, SL, CV. **Tundra Swan:** 282 MNWR 4 Dec (DR); 60-80 Canoga 6 Jan- 25 Feb. **Mute Swan:** overwintered WG. **Greater White-fronted Goose:** imm StP 15 Dec- 5 Jan. **Snow Goose:** overwintered SL, CL. **Canada Goose:** 10,975 CLFWC; 13 SSLFWC; 179 CVCBC. **Green-winged Teal:** two WG 15 Dec; one CLFWC. **Am. Black Duck:** 330 CLFWC, 14 SSLFWC. **Mallard:** ca. 20,000-50,000 overwintered in Region. **N. Pintail:** period CL; max eight StP 12 Jan; one CV 14 Jan; two SL 14 Feb. **N. Shoveler:** 25 Canoga 11 Dec. **Gadwall:** five US 14 Jan; eight WG 15 Jan; 12 Waneta L 15 Jan. **Am. Wigeon:** 15 Canoga 11 Dec; two MNWR 14 Jan. **Canvasback:** 65 ICBC; 250 Sampson State Park 22 Feb. **Redhead:** 18

ICBC; 550 Keuka L 15 Jan; 21 CLFWC; two EL 20 Feb. **Ring-necked Duck**: singles CL; 58 Lamoka L 15 Jan. **Greater Scaup**: 26 ICBC; 15 GE 15 Dec. **Lesser Scaup**: two ICBC; several GE. **Surf Scoter**: three WG 1 Feb-18 Feb (JB). **White-winged Scoter**: three WG 5 Jan-17 Feb (JB). **Com. Goldeneye**: three EL 1 Feb; 483 CLFWC; overwintered SL, CL. **Bufflehead**: four EL 27 Feb; 135 CLFWC; 19 SSLFWC; overwintered SL, CL. **Hooded Merganser**: two Canandaigua L 15 Jan; 17 Waneta L 1 Jan; 33 ICBC. **Com. Merganser**: 31 CLFWC; winter SL, CL, CV; 36 Waneta L 1 Jan. **Red-breasted Merganser**: 39 CLFWC; overwintered SL, CL. **Ruddy Duck**: 28 MNWR 4 Dec.

N. Harrier: numerous. **Bald Eagle**: max three MNWR 19 Feb. **Sharp-shinned Hawk**: five ICBC; five CVCBC; singles widespread. **Cooper's Hawk**: seven ICBC; two CVCBC; singles widespread. **N. Goshawk**: two CLB 9 Jan (CD); one Mecklenberg all winter. **Red-shouldered Hawk**: arr Ithaca 22 Feb, early. **Red-tailed Hawk**: 90 ICBC; 40 CVCBC; 15 WGCBC; numerous all winter. **Rough-legged Hawk**: 16 ICBC; 11 WGCBC; 28 Seneca Falls 27 Feb; up to a third that overwintered were dark morphs. **Am. Kestrel**: max four ICBC; three CVCBC; four WGCBC. **Merlin**: singles ICBC, WGCBC, Geneva 23 Dec-1 Jan. **Ring-necked Pheasant**: max nine ICBC; three WGCBC. **Ruffed Grouse**: max 15 ICBC; two WGCBC. **Wild Turkey**: max 38 ICBC. **Am. Coot**: 368 CLFWC; 223 SSLFWC. **Killdeer**: singles MPt 20 Dec, CV 14 Jan. **Bonaparte's Gull**: one GE 15 Dec. **Ring-billed Gull**: 500 ICBC; 568 CVCBC; 489 WGCBC. **Herring Gull**: 300 ICBC; 95 WGCBC; 2500 Seneca Falls 7 Feb. **Iceland Gull**: one Seneca Falls 21 Jan-19 Feb; one MPt 10 Feb. **Glaucous Gull**: two StP 8 Feb (BE, AB); two Seneca Falls 19 Feb; one MNWR 19 Feb. **Lesser Black-backed Gull**: one StP 10 Dec (KR); three ICBC; one Seneca Falls 23 Jan. **Great Black-backed Gull**: 63 StP 22 Jan; regular SL, CL all winter. **Ross's Gull**: ad MPt, StP 12 Jan (CH, NYSARC).

Mourning Dove: 1210 ICBC; 312 CVCBC; 76 WGCBC. **E. Screech-Owl**: 12 ICBC; eight CVCBC. **Great Horned Owl**: 22 ICBC; seven CVCBC. **Snowy Owl**: one ICBC; four GE 21 Dec-26 Dec; one MNWR 14 Jan. **Barred Owl**: five ICBC. **Long-eared Owl**: 2 Ithaca winter. **Short-eared Owl**: max up to 50 KF Jan. **Belted Kingfisher**: six ICBC; two CVCBC. **Red-bellied Woodpecker**: 56 ICBC; six CVCBC. **Downy Woodpecker**: 256 ICBC; 48 CVCBC; 28 WGCBC. **Hairy Woodpecker**: 71 ICBC; eight CVCBC; three WGCBC. **N. Flicker**: 44 ICBC; five CVCBC; four WGCBC. **Pileated Woodpecker**: 26 ICBC; two WGCBC.

Horned Lark: numerous, max 300 KF 8 Jan. **Blue Jay**: 618 ICBC; 290 CVCBC; 62 WGCBC. **Am. Crow**: 1599 ICBC; 552 CVCBC; 800 WGCBC.

Fish Crow: eight ICBC. **Com. Raven:** one CVCBC; three Finger Lakes National Forest all winter; two Hammond Hill State Forest all winter; one Ithaca Jan. **Black-capped Chickadee:** 2397 ICBC; 488 CVCBC; 383 WGCBC. **Tufted Titmouse:** 209 ICBC; 69 CVCBC; 33 WGCBC. **Red-breasted Nuthatch:** 18 ICBC; six CVCBC; four WGCBC. **White-breasted Nuthatch:** 226 ICBC; 41 CVCBC; 34 WGCBC. **Brown Creeper:** 37 ICBC; six CVCBC; one WGCBC. **Carolina Wren:** 10 ICBC; two CVCBC; one WGCBC. **Winter Wren:** one-two Ithaca all winter. **Golden-crowned Kinglet:** 39 ICBC; 15 CVCBC; 17 WGCBC. **Ruby-crowned Kinglet:** two ICBC; one Horseheads 14 Jan. **E. Bluebird:** 27 ICBC; on WGCBC; widespread all winter. **Hermit Thrush:** single ICBC, Cornell Univ. 5 Feb. **Am. Robin:** 328 ICBC; 24 CVCBC; 36 WGCBC. **N. Mockingbird:** 22 ICBC; 10 CVCBC; several Geneva all winter. **Cedar Waxwing:** 519 ICBC; 15 CVCBC; 58 WGCBC. **N. Shrike:** two ICBC; one CVCBC; one WGCBC; scattered reports all winter. **European Starling:** 14753 ICBC; 1320 CVCBC; 718 WGCBC.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: six+ Aurora all winter; scattered reports all winter. **Yellow-throated Warbler:** one Ithaca 8-10 Dec (DH, NYSARC), supercilium entirely white as typical of western subspecies *albilora*. **Pine Warbler:** one Freeville all winter. **Com. Yellowthroat:** singles ICBC, WG 23 Dec- 13 Jan.

N. Cardinal: 299 ICBC; 84 CVCBC; 32 WGCBC. **Rufous-sided Towhee:** one Southport 5 Feb. **Am. Tree Sparrow:** 323 ICBC; 150 CVCBC; 54 WGCBC. **Field Sparrow:** two Caroline 27 Dec. **Savannah Sparrow:** one Caroline 1 Jan; one Mecklenberg 3 Jan; late. **Song Sparrow:** 38 ICBC; ten CVCBC; one WGCBC. **Swamp Sparrow:** one WG 1 Jan; two Caroline 1 Jan. **White-throated Sparrow:** 74 ICBC; 11 CVCBC; eight WGCBC. **White-crowned Sparrow:** one ICBC; three CV 11 Feb. **Dark-eyed Junco:** 410 ICBC; 266 CVCBC; 108 WGCBC. **Lapland Longspur:** two Dryden 12 Jan (KD). **Snow Bunting:** scattered, max 200 Southport 14 Feb. **Red-winged Blackbird:** four Caroline all winter. **E. Meadowlark:** one Danby 28 Dec (SK). **Rusty Blackbird:** two CVCBC; 18 ICBC. **Com. Grackle:** 50 Union Springs 3 Jan (BE). **Brown-headed Cowbird:** nine ICBC; 20 WGCBC. **Purple Finch:** singles widespread. **Am. Goldfinch:** 226 ICBC; 52 CVCBC; 19 WGCBC. **Evening Grosbeak:** one Mecklenberg 17 Dec; one WG 1 Jan, scarce.

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REGION 4 — SUSQUEHANNA

MARY DOBINSKY

Winter was hardly worthy of the name until February. On the heels of a dry and very mild fall, December and January just followed the same pattern. At Oneonta the mean temperature for December was 32°F, almost 7° above normal. Rainfall for the month was slightly below normal and only 2.40 inches of snow fell, most of that on 8 Dec. The New Year started with rain, sleet, a little snow and a few cold days, but January will be best remembered for lack of snow, lots of sun and four successive days of record high (58-62°F) temperatures from 13 to 16 Jan. With time running out, winter finally put its act together. It started at Cooperstown with the season's first subzero temperatures on 28 Jan, the latest date in the past 82 winters, according to Harold Hollis, National Weather Service observer. Then on 4 Feb the Region was hit with its only major snowstorm. Accumulations ranged from 10.6 inches at Binghamton to 13.7 inches at Cooperstown. Quickly following the snow were about 10 days of near zero temperatures and strong west winds. Warmer days the latter part of the month didn't quite offset the earlier cold. As a result February temperatures were recorded as a little colder than normal. Also total snow for the month was slightly above normal, but snow for the winter season was only half the usual amount.

Except for a few days in February, rivers and creeks were mostly open and, since precipitation fell most often as rain, stream water levels remained high all season. Birders out on January waterfowl counts complained of swift currents and lack of shoreline. However, 13 species of duck for the season, including eight species of diving duck, was an excellent record. American Coot was a season surprise. In a normal year, ten would have been excellent, but unprecedented numbers were found at Otsego Lake.

Lack of snow cover created ideal hunting conditions for predators so, not surprisingly, it was one of the best winters ever for raptors. Highlights included a record total for Northern Harrier on Christmas Bird Counts; two reports of Red-shouldered Hawk, and several reports of both Bald and Golden Eagle. Andy Mason noted that his DOAS CBC team watched a Golden Eagle "dive into a flock of Wild Turkey, but he didn't get one." Andy added that on reporting to Bob Miller, DOAS compiler, Bob was reminded of witnessing similar behavior last May when a Golden Eagle struck a turkey twice, both times unsuccessfully.

Atop winter events was a rare *Boreal Owl*, probably a first Regional report. Four other owl species were reported but only a single Eastern Screech-Owl while Northern Saw-whet Owl was missed. Shrike is our other possible predator species, but N. Shrike, the expected one, was not reported. Instead it was a *Loggerhead Shrike*.

In an addendum to his 1994 Franklin Mt. Hawk Watch report, Chris Vredenburg, compiler, theorized that "raptors migrate through our area on a broader front than currently studied." The most recent indication to him was the passage of 15 Golden Eagles at two sites 8 Dec. Of these, 12 were seen at the hawk watch site and all but one before 1:15 p.m. No Bald Eagle was seen. Later in the day and 25 miles northwest, at his West Burlington home, Tom Salo sighted three Golden Eagles plus one Bald Eagle between 2:00 and 3:00 p.m., all flying southwest. "Given the geography involved," Chris concluded, "it is unlikely that the flight route of the birds Tom saw could have passed by Franklin Mt."

For top news among game birds, we choose the flock of Ruffed Grouse that patronized an old hedgerow in back of Elva Hawken's home, T Preston CHEN. From the first of December until 17 Jan, as many as 20 grouse stopped to feed morning and evening as they traveled to and from their roosting sites. Fruits of nannyberry, arrowwood and hawthorn were the hedgerow's menu specials.

The mild winter made anything seem possible. Species such as Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Ruby-crowned Kinglet and Rose-breasted Grosbeak, seldom here in December, were on Christmas Bird Counts. Good numbers of Northern Flicker, Eastern Bluebird and American Robin, and a single Rufous-sided Towhee overwintered. In contrast the half-hardy species we expect at our feeders were scarce. Carolina Wren numbers have been down since last winter's killing cold weather. Perhaps Northern Cardinal and Northern Mockingbird missed the abundance of Multiflora Rose bushes they favor for winter food and cover. Many plants didn't recover from last winter's damage. Missed most were the winter finches who evidently were content with the weather and available food in their northern territories. No crossbills were reported, and only a few individuals of other finch species were listed. A sad note on finches were single reports of house finches with eye disease from CHEN, CORT and DELA. From McGraw, Bill Toner reported caging a finch he found with "crusted and closed eyes," treating the eyes with medication and releasing it a week later.

Rarities of the season were *Boreal Owl* and *Loggerhead Shrike*. Missed species included Pied-billed Grebe, Bufflehead, Northern Shrike and Common Grackle.

Observers: Cutler & Jeannette Baldwin, Les Bemont, Bruce Bozdos, Mary Ann Cuff, John Davis, Charley Dever, Mary Dobinsky, Sadie Dorber, Dolores Elliott, Roy and Margaret Gorton, Bob Grosek, Jim Hoteling, Sara Kinch, Gail Kirch, David Lincoln, Harriet Marsi, Andy Mason, G & E Mead, Bob Miller, Sue & Chip Metheney, R. Pantle, Marie Petuh, Dave Rossi (DRo), David Russell, Tom Salo, Bob & Jean Saunders, Joseph Sedlacek, Eric Sullivan, Tom and Norene Tasber, Chris Vredenburg, D. Weber, Anne Whitaker, Don Windsor, Irene Wright, Jane Young, Dick Zeccada.

Abbreviations: BCBC - Broome Christmas Bird Count, 18 Dec; CanRes - Cannonsville Reservoir; ChCBC - Chenango Christmas Bird Count, 17 Dec; CoCBC - Cortland Christmas Bird Count 17 Dec; DOASCBC - Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count, 17 Dec; FHNC - Finch Hollow Nature Center; FMHW - Franklin Mt. Hawk Watch site; JC - Johnson City; TBC- Tioga Bird Club; TCBC - Tioga Christmas Bird Count, 26 Dec.

Winter reports: **Com. Loon:** Susquehanna R at Binghamton 25 Dec (ES); OTSE 15 Jan (AM). **Double-crested Cormorant:** OTSE 15 Jan (AM), late. **Great Blue Heron:** 17 on five CBCs; five Jan reports; three Feb, good count. **Snow Geese:** seven BCBC, not seen every winter. **Canada Goose:** 2387 on five CBCs; 1,000+ Otsego L through Jan; occasional flocks all winter. **Wood Duck:** two BCBC. **Green-winged Teal:** three CanRes 16 Jan, second winter in last six. **Am. Black Duck:** 121 on five CBCs; 78 CanRes 16 Jan; off Route 12 BROO through Feb (T&NT), max 30. **Mallard:** 1425 on five CBCs, good numbers through period, especially BROO. **N. Pintail:** Susquehanna R at Westover 28 Jan (MAC). **Canvasback:** nine TCBC (C&JB), often missed. **Redhead:** Chenango R Binghamton 19 Feb (PB); River Road Endwell 26 Feb (JH), not reported every winter. **Ring-necked Duck:** 28 CoCBC. **Greater Scaup:** BROO 8 Dec (HM). **Com. Goldeneye:** 15 CoCBC; three Jan reports, max eight DELA 29 Jan; two Feb reports, max eight BROO 19 Feb, scarce. **Hooded Merganser:** six CoCBC; two OTSE 15 Jan; singles TIOG Dec, BROO Feb, scarce. **Com. Merganser:** max 100 Goodyear L through 6 Dec; good numbers widespread through period. **Red-breasted Merganser:** only Tioughnioga R canoe trip 2 Jan (BG).

Osprey: last T Preston CHEN 8 Dec (EH), fifth winter since 1984, very rare before then. **Bald Eagle:** four of six Jan reports were from DELA Res area, max 14 TBC Eagle count 29 Jan; one BROO 12 Jan (T&NT); Owego 21 Jan (SK); Schenevus 13 Feb (DR), five s Hancock 17 Feb (BG), very high. **N. Harrier:** 20 on five CBCs. **Sharp-shinned Hawk:** 12 on five CBCs; nine Feb reports, high. **Cooper's Hawk:** 10 on five CBCs; at many

widespread feeders through period. **N. Goshawk:** DOASCBC; Chenango R Norwich 14, 15 Dec (DW); T Preston 17, 25 Jan and 12 Feb (EH); TIOG 25 Jan (G&EM); Downsville area 3 Feb (BG), high count. **Red-shouldered Hawk:** FMHW 10 Dec; arr JC 26 Feb (JH), first winter reports in 16 years. **Red-tailed Hawk:** 144 on five CBCs; 37 DELA 29 Jan (TBC); 11 BROO 10 Feb (HM), high counts through. **Rough-legged Hawk:** 30 on four CBCs; 10 reports both Jan, Feb, max three, good count. **Golden Eagle:** *intro.* **Am. Kestrel:** 15 on four CBCs; 10 Jan, Feb, good counts especially BROO, TIOG. **Ring-necked Pheasant:** seven four CBCs; "female with no tail feathers" JC feeder 4, 5 Jan (JH); four Feb reports, max three. **Ruffed Grouse:** *intro.* **Wild Turkey:** 535 on five CBCs; late winter max 200+ in four flocks CHEN (EH) and in three flocks OTSE (MD) 17 Feb. **Am. Coot:** record max 116 Otsego L 15 Jan; later reports indicated good numbers remained around the docks at Waterfront Park through the period. **Ring-billed Gull:** 438 on four CBCs, mostly CORT. **Herring Gull:** 945 CoCBC, high count. **Great Black-backed Gull:** max 13 CoCBC; BROO 27, 29 Jan (HM, BB, GK); 25 Tioughnioga R at Cortland 7 Feb, 30 on 13 Feb (BT), good total.

Mourning Dove: 898 on five CBCs, good count. **E. Screech-Owl:** only TIOG Dec (JS). **Great Horned Owl:** five BCBC; two T Preston late Dec and 15, 25 Feb; singles TIOG Dec, Jan. **Barred Owl:** singles T Preston Dec, Feb; BROO Dec. **Snowy Owl:** Route 41 Homer 1 Feb (CD), sometimes missed. **Boreal Owl:** first heard outside T Preston CHEN home about 5:45 AM 28 Dec (EH) when the unfamiliar sound, "high-pitched hollow hoos all on one note," tracked for about 25 minutes as the bird apparently moved slowly through a large stand of evergreens; "By that time, I had the call well fixed in my mind and had it pinned down to that of Long-eared or Boreal Owl. It was then easy to listen to my tapes and identify the mystery bird as Boreal; heard it again 31 Dec but was never able to see it". **Belted Kingfisher:** 10 on four CBCs; two-three reports/month. **Red-bellied Woodpecker:** nine on three CBCs mostly TIOG; three TIOG sites, one CORT Jan. **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** DOASCBC. **N. Flicker:** 10 on three CBCs. **Pileated Woodpecker:** 15 on four CBCs.

Horned Lark: max 102 ChCBC; 20 Smyrna 4 Dec; late winter max 50 Riley Road CORT 22-24 Feb, excellent count. **Am. Crow:** record CBC total 4,070. **Com. Raven:** n of Cooperstown 29 Jan "seen and heard singing" (JD); one TIOG Jan (RP); third successive winter, expanding its southern range? **Black-capped Chickadee:** 2214 on five CBCs. **Tufted Titmouse:** 144 on five CBCs, third highest count. **Red-breasted Nuthatch:** 46 on five CBCs; fewer at winter feeders. **Brown Creeper:** 24

on five CBCs, average count. **Carolina Wren**: continued scarce. **Golden-crowned Kinglet**: 59 on five CBCs, best since 1984; several TIOG Jan, one CORT Feb. **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**: three CoCBC. **E. Bluebird**: max 30 on TCBC; max four on two of eight Feb reports, best ever. **Am. Robin**: only 15 on three CBCs; big increase by mid Feb, max 100+. **N. Mockingbird**: two-three reports/month, all BROO except one TIOG, scarce. **Cedar Waxwing**: 486 on four CBCs second highest count last 15 years; crab apples an attraction to large flocks Feb. **Loggerhead Shrike**: one CHEN CBC (S&CM! *fide* DW).

N. Cardinal: 198 on five CBCs, lowest since 1988. **Rose-breasted Grosbeak**: well described first fall male Norwich 22 Dec (DW), only third winter report since 1979. **Rufous-sided Towhee**: Burlington Flats feeder after 9 Dec (DL), often missed. **Am. Tree Sparrow**: 393 on five CBCs, best count since 1989; continued high through period max 70 BROO 10 Feb (MP). **Song Sparrow**: 28 on three CBCs, high. **White-throated Sparrow**: 13 on two CBCs; occasional at widespread feeders, max six JC 5 Feb after snowstorm, scant. **Snow Bunting**: 86 on three CBCs, max 60 CORT; BROO County Landfill 14 Dec-4 Jan, max 20 (JH, BG), only reports. **Red-winged Blackbird**: several Sherburne 13 Dec; arr JC 20 Feb. **E. Meadowlark**: Binghamton CBC. **Brown-headed Cowbird**: 166 on three CBCs, high; arr T Preston 20 Feb. **Pine Grosbeak**: two females near Oxford 22 Dec (DW); max 14 Binghamton "feeding on crab apples" 21 Jan (DRo); single BROO 9 Jan (DZ), scarce. **Purple Finch**: 41 on three CBCs; T Preston yard through period max 27 on 21 Feb (EH). **Com. Redpoll**: 13 ChCBC; five CHEN feeder 23 Dec, scarce. **Pine Siskin**: max 20+ "feeding in Hemlock trees, high elevation Bradley Creek Rd., BROO" 19 Jan (JH); three DOASCBC; singles Vestal 9 Jan, Oneonta 14 Feb, scarce. **Am. Goldfinch**: 353 on five CBCs; scarce at feeders until Jan; several flocks 100+ Feb. **Evening Grosbeak**: 14 on two CBCs; one CHEN 26 Dec, scarce.

CORRIGENDUM: *Kingbird* 44:312. Delete the entry for **Horned Grebe**; no such record was received.

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REGION 5 — ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

DOROTHY W. CRUMB AND JIM THROCKMORTON

We are beginning to wonder what a normal season is in Central New York. Last winter had too much snow, this winter practically none. December and January had above normal temperatures. The average December temperature of 31.9°F was 3.6° above normal. Snowfall at 5.6 inches was 20.3 inches below normal, with only one day of the month receiving more than one inch. Only one previous winter had less snowfall. This small amount of snow was balanced somewhat by a record rainfall on 5 Dec of 1.05 inches. This brought total precipitation of 2.52 inches to only 0.68 inches less than normal. December 1994 was the sunniest on record with 47% of possible sun. Braced for a January that would make up for December, we were pleasantly surprised when it didn't happen. January temperatures averaged 8° above normal. The 13.4 inches of snow was 14.5 inches below normal and the total precipitation of 1.80 inches was a half inch below normal. Next we looked forward to February which, as it turned out, was more like February. The average temperature of 20.7°F was 3.3° below normal. A low of -10° on 26 Feb equaled the previous low temperature for that date. Snowfall totaled 32.5 inches which is 7.3 inches above average. This melted down to 2.19 inches of precipitation, just 0.04 inches more than usual.

The result of this warm temperature was much more open water. Waterfowl were spread out and difficult to locate. Although Common Loon was numerous on the Oswego Christmas Count, few were found thereafter. One Common Loon landed in a small quarry in South Onondaga and was unable to fly out. When the quarry froze, the loon was rescued, fed, and released on a larger body of water. Double-crested Cormorant was scarce, despite much open water. The highest count ever of American Coot was found on the January waterfowl count, and they were seen in smaller numbers, but regularly, throughout the season. Tundra Swan set a midwinter record maximum. Although a nice variety of duck stayed in Oswego Harbor, numbers were very low. Only one rare waterfowl, Harlequin Duck, was found, and these birds disappeared when we finally got a freeze in February. A *Sandhill Crane* was the first winter record for a bird that is rare in any season. There have been only 15 sightings over the years in the Onondaga Lake Basin. Great Blue Heron would have been expected to stay with many places to

feed, but almost none were found after December. The same was true for Belted Kingfisher. Also unexpected were only two reports of Killdeer and only one report of Common Snipe. A possibility is that with so much open habitat, these birds were scattered in areas not normally covered in winter by observers. "White-winged" gulls were scarce, but an immature *Thayer's Gull* was reported.

The open winter did provide feeding areas for raptors. Numbers of Rough-legged Hawk and Short-eared Owl shared one location in Oswego County, where the change of guard from Rough-legged Hawk during the day to Short-eared Owl hunting at dusk could be observed. There were at least four other locations for Short-eared Owl but only one or two individuals were present at them, and two were turned into rehabilitator Cindy Page. Other raptors turned over to Cindy this winter were single adult and one immature Cooper's Hawk, both apparently hit by cars, an Eastern Screech-Owl and a belated Turkey Vulture. Other Turkey Vulture were reported for only the second winter ever in Region 5. An injured Red-tailed Hawk, found in Little Falls, had been banded at Hawk Mountain, Pennsylvania in October, 1975. This year, for only the third year in Region 5 in 18 years, Red-shouldered Hawk was reported. Merlin overwintered in Syracuse, and Bald Eagle was widely reported. Only one Snowy Owl was reported for the entire winter. but two Long-eared Owl were found.

Before snow covered the mast crop, Wild Turkey tended to stay in the woods where they had plenty of cover. As snow came in February, more were seen in open fields. On 23 February, Gene Huggins saw a record number of 218, including 194 in one flock in MADI, the largest number ever recorded in one flock. He also saw smaller groups of 6 to 18 that same day in adjacent ONEI.

American Robin saved their energy and did not bother to migrate. Most observers noted their abundance. The 1 January 1995 Montezuma Christmas Count in the Howland Island area in Cayuga County turned up a remarkable number of land birds that are rarely seen in this period, no doubt the result of very open conditions that had prevailed until then. The list includes Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Brown Creeper, Marsh Wren, Hermit Thrush, Field Sparrow and Rusty Blackbird. American Robin, Cedar Waxwing, American Tree, White-throated and Song Sparrow were present in larger numbers than usual. There were two later reports of Hermit Thrush elsewhere. Other half-hardy species reported were Common Yellowthroat in December, and Rufous-sided Towhee. A few Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle and Brown-headed Cowbird were present all winter.

There was an invasion of Red Crossbill in the Adirondacks where spruce trees had abundant cones. Pine Siskin were also in large numbers in evergreens and larches. A few White-winged Crossbill were also located. There was no echo flight of Common Redpoll from last winter. In contrast, hardly any Snow Bunting and Horned Lark were found during the winter. There were no reports of Lapland Longspur.

Highlights of the season were Harlequin Duck, the large number of Red Crossbill and Pine Siskin in the Adirondacks, a good variety of passerines wintering at Howland Island, the number of raptors remaining in the north and *Sandhill Crane*. The negatives were the lack of species that would normally stay in open winters, such as Double-crested Cormorant, Common Loon, Killdeer and Common Snipe. Carolina Wren still hasn't recovered from two disastrous winters. For the first time, modern technology entered into the Region 5 report with four observers submitting their material via E-mail.

Contributors: Sue Adair, Sue Boettger, Joe Brin, David Cesari, Dorothy Crumb, Paul DeBenedictis, Mary Dreiling, Dave Eichorn, Robert Evans, Craig Fosdick, Bill Gruenbaum, John Hanyak, Gene Huggins, Mary Alice Koenke, Gary Lee, Bob Lockett, David Nash, Cindy Page, Wayne Powell, Bill Purcell, Steve Rulison, Marge Rusk, Maureen Staloff, Molly Thompson, Jim Throckmorton, Adrienne Wolfe-Lockett, Glenn Wolford, Judy Wright, Ken Zoller.

Abbreviations: Adks - Adirondacks; DH - Derby Hill Oswego; LSB - Little Sodus Bay, Fairhaven, and vicinity; MCBC - Howland Island sector of Montezuma Christmas Bird Count, 1 Jan; NPT - northern Pompey Township; OnonL - Onondaga Lake; SkCBC - Skaneateles CBC, 31 Dec; SyCBC - Syracuse Christmas Count, 17 Dec.

Winter reports: **Red-throated Loon:** only three reports. **Com. Loon:** max 13 Oswego CBC 18 Dec; four OnonL 21 Dec disappeared when that part of the lake froze; two Fourth L near Old Forge HERK 14 Dec, late date for Adks; *intro.* **Pied-billed Grebe:** only two reports. **Horned Grebe:** none. **Double-crested Cormorant:** 14 Oswego 3 Dec; 8 Oswego CBC 18 Dec; only one found after 1 Jan, none on the waterfowl count for the second year in a row. **Great Blue Heron:** five MCBC, scarce. **Tundra Swan:** seasonal record max eight Bridgeport 14-16 Jan; five LSB 13 Dec; five Bridgeport 13 Dec. **Snow Goose:** two LSB 22 Jan (PD), one Holland Patent 29 Dec-2 Jan, unusual in winter. **Wood Duck:** four SyCBC, none on waterfowl count for first time since 1987. **Green-winged Teal:** max 25 SyCBC. **N. Pintail:** max three OnonL 11 Jan. **Gadwall:** max 44 OnonL 10 Jan. **Canvasback:** max three Oneida L 12 Dec. **Harlequin Duck:** one near DH 19-22 Jan (JH, mob); one OnonL 23 Jan (JH).

Oldsquaw: missed on waterfowl count for first time ever, max only 16 Oswego Harbor 19 Feb. **White-winged Scoter:** record winter max 160 DH 22 Jan. **Com. Goldeneye:** max 230 LSB 31 Jan. **Bufflehead:** max 88 Oswego Harbor 26 Feb. **Com. Merganser:** max 6200 OnonL 10 Jan, highest in 38 years.

Turkey Vulture: one with a broken wing Kirkville 2 Jan; present near Jamesville through mid January, where they roost in a quarry in the summer; one T Lysander 22 Jan. **Bald Eagle:** one SkCBC, first ever; ten reported throughout the season. **Red-shouldered Hawk:** ad Pumpkin Hollow, T Marcellus ONON 29 Jan (MSR!); imm Mattydale 1 Feb (SR!). **Red-tailed Hawk:** *intro.* **Rough-legged Hawk:** max 12 Prior Road T Schroepfel Oswe 17 Jan. **Merlin:** male found fairly regularly at dusk going to roost in Onondaga P Syracuse; ad male Solvay 5 Feb (SR), same individual? **Wild Turkey:** *intro.* **Sandhill Crane:** one flying over OnonL inlet 1 Feb (SR). **Am. Coot:** 125 on Waterfowl Census, most ever. **Killdeer:** only two reports. **Com. Snipe:** one Weedsport 29 Jan. **Thayer's Gull:** imm Baldwinsville 14 Dec (JH); one there 15 Jan, same individual? **Iceland Gull:** only three reports. **Glaucous Gull:** one ad, two imm OnonL 15 Jan (MSR); one Oswego Harbor throughout Feb (mob).

Snowy Owl: very dark imm Oswego Harbor after 8 Jan, only report. **Long-eared Owl:** two roosting in pines Beaver L Nature Center Baldwinsville 15-20 Jan (MT); one found injured T Pompey 27 Dec, turned over to CP. **Short-eared Owl:** max eight Prior Road T Schroepfel OSWE 17 Jan; roosting in the pines Beaver L Nature Center Baldwinsville (MT); two, probably hit by cars, one from New Hartford and one from S. Onondaga, sent to CP for rehabilitation. **N. Saw-whet Owl:** one report, Adks 22 Feb (GL). **Belted Kingfisher:** scarce, only five locations for the entire winter. **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** one MCBC. **N. Flicker:** max five Clay Marsh 28 Dec.

Horned Lark: scarce. **Brown Creeper:** max three MCBC. **Carolina Wren:** only two reports, Syracuse 17 Dec, Clay Marsh 25 Jan. **Winter Wren:** only two Dec reports, none later. **Marsh Wren:** one Clay Marsh 17-21 Dec, one MCBC. **Hermit Thrush:** max two MCBC; one Camillus 28 Jan; one Clay Marsh 8 Feb. **Am. Robin:** 229 Oswego CBC, 10 times its previous max there; 400 MCBC; very numerous near Baldwinsville. **Cedar Waxwing:** more than usual. **N. Shrike:** singles at six locations.

Com. Yellowthroat: one Baldwinsville 27 Dec; one Camillus SkCBC.

Rufous-sided Towhee: pair T Spafford SkCBC, first on SkCBC since 1976; one at a feeder Baldwinsville during Feb. **Field Sparrow:** one MCBC. **Snow Bunting:** max flock of 500 Sangerfield ONEI 23 Feb.

Lapland Longspur: none. **Rusty Blackbird:** one MCBC. **Brown-headed Cowbird:** max 100 Fabius 29 Jan. **Purple Finch:** only sighting outside Adks, Howland I CAYU 16 Jan (BP). **Red Crossbill:** mainly in Adks, max 80 near Old Forge 11 Feb. **White-winged Crossbill:** three reports, 30 NPT 6 Jan (DC), two Adks 29 Jan (BP), seven Adks 18 Feb (BP). **Com. Redpoll:** almost none. **Pine Siskin:** max 200 near Old Forge 11 Feb. **Evening Grosbeak:** only reported from Adks.

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REGION 6 — ST. LAWRENCE

The Region 6 report had not arrived in time for inclusion in this issue of *The Kingbird*.

REGION 7 — ADIRONDACK-CHAMPLAIN

JOHN M. C. PETERSON

Winter 1994-95 was an exceptionally easy one for both birds and birders, ranking as the 17th least snowy winter on record in the Champlain Valley. All of the Christmas Bird Counts were conducted on mostly bare ground, with no more than 6 inches of snow in higher elevation forests. Lake Champlain stood at 95.04 ft and 42°F on 19 Dec, remaining partly open throughout the season and providing a steady stream of Bald Eagle reports. A warming trend 18 Dec led to a thaw that lasted until 28 Dec. Thermometers dropped to -17°F at Malone on 10 Jan, but soared to 56°F at Plattsburgh 14 Jan, 66°F the next day, and 50°F at Saranac Lake on 16 Jan; even Inlet had bare ground 15-20 Jan. A stretch of clear weather and temperatures in the 30's marked the end of the month, which finished as the fourth warmest January since 1884. February opened with a warm front, before a 4 Feb storm dumped 18 inches of snow on Elizabethtown, where temperatures then dropped to -12°F on 6 Feb. Winds reached 62 mph at Malone 15 Feb. The season closed with cold and snow, although an Eastern Chipmunk made an early appearance at an Elizabethtown feeder on 27 Feb.

The wild food crop was superb. Higher elevations had so many mountain ash berries and spruce cones that Gary Lee witnessed

American Robin and Red Crossbill singing in the same tree in HAMI. The lower valleys offered a cornucopia of buckthorn, dogwood, hemlock, red cedar, sumac, and wild grape. Needless to say, feeder watchers complained of a shortage of birds, while field observers were ecstatic. The Elizabethtown CBC tied the 1992 record of 44 species. Nevertheless, the total of 90 seasonal species was down from the 96 species reported in winter 1993-94, a year when there was a severe shortage of wild food.

As mentioned, Bald Eagle was numerous along open stretches of Champlain throughout the winter, perhaps most easily seen from the Amtrak "Adirondack" between Ticonderoga and Wickham Marsh. The train crew counted *ten* between Ticonderoga and Westport 25 Jan, certainly a modern record for the lake. A few even wintered in the central Adirondacks.

Birds that are frugivorous in winter were unusually abundant. Northern Flicker was numerous in December. Eastern Bluebird was widely reported at lower elevations. American Robin was abundant not only in the Champlain Valley but also in the Adirondacks, thanks to the bumper crop of mountain ash, even deep within the High Peaks Wilderness. Cedar Waxwing was similarly abundant. Bohemian Waxwing, seen just once in the fall, was absent this winter.

The cone crop attracted winter finches, which in turn pulled in numbers of visiting birders looking for crossbills. Least abundant finch this winter was Pine Grosbeak. Purple Finch could be found all over, but were most abundant around Saranac Lake. Red Crossbill (or crossbills, if, as suggested, several species are involved) could be found everywhere there are evergreens or tamaracks in the Adirondacks. White-winged Crossbill were similarly abundant, and Pine Siskin was plentiful. Certainly the most common feeder bird was American Goldfinch. Although scarce at lower elevations, Evening Grosbeak could be found in respectable numbers in the central Adirondacks. Other noteworthy feeder birds included Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Northern Goshawk, *Golden Eagle*, Ruffed Grouse, Wild Turkey, Gray Jay, Common Raven, Northern Shrike, and Red Crossbill.

Seasonal highlights included Barrow's Goldeneye, Golden Eagle, and a Gyrfalcon suspected to be the same individual present in the winters of 1992-93 and 1993-94. Helping to close out a season of mild weather and memorable birds was the congregation of *Short-eared Owl*, first reported by one of Judy Heintz's ornithology students and subsequently enjoyed by many observers.

Contributors: Ethel & Tom Baker, Merry Baker, Richard Blinn, Geoffrey Carleton, Charlie Delehanty, Mike Devlin, Sean Donaghy,

Beth Edmunds, Ray Fadden, Michael Fitzgerald, Donna Frenyea, Greg Furness, Robert Hagar, Terry Hall, Judy & Roger Heintz, Candy & John Hess, Selma Isil, Hal Klein, Russ Koch, Bill Krueger, Gary Lee, Richard MacDonald, Theodore Mack, Larry Master, Charles Mitchell, Charles Mitchell, Jr., Dan Nickerson, John Parke, John & Susan Peterson, Alan Pistorius, Gary Randorf, Atea Ring, Dean Spaulding, Trisha Spaulding, John & Pat Thaxton, Don & Donna Traver, Ellie Warner, Robert Wei, Hollis White.

Abbreviations: APt - Ausable Point WMA; ECBC - Elizabethtown CBC, 24 Dec; FCBC - Ferrisburg CBC, 17 Dec; FWC - Federation Waterfowl Count; PCBC - Plattsburgh CBC, 18 Dec; SLCBC - Saranac Lake CBC, 31 Dec.

Winter reports: **Com. Loon:** open water L Simond FRAN 7 Dec (CD); Seventh L HAMI 14 Dec (GL), unusually late inland. **Horned Grebe:** max 20 APt 10 Dec (CH). **Red-necked Grebe:** Essex 22 Feb, only sighting. **Great Blue Heron:** last SLCBC. **Snow Goose:** nine Beekmantown 17 Jan (J&RH, BK), late CLIN. **Canada Goose:** pair wintered Tupper L (CD); 200-500 Plattsburgh Feb, when previously unreported in CLIN. **Wood Duck:** APt 10 Dec (CH), late. **Am. Black Duck:** max 206 FWC. **Mallard:** max 1,550 FWC. **N. Pintail:** Monty Bay and Saranac L, unusual in winter. **Canvasback:** hen APt 13-21 Feb, only report. **Redhead:** two APt Jan, only report. **Oldsquaw:** one Westport 14 Jan; two Essex 29 Jan (DS), scarce here in winter. **Surf Scoter:** one APt 17 Dec (BK), a good find. **White-winged Scoter:** PCBC; three Port Kent 3 & 13 Dec (CH), also unusual. **Barrow's Goldeneye:** drake Westport 13 Dec (J&PT); pair off Wickham Marsh n of Port Kent 29 Jan (MP, DS). **Red-breasted Merganser:** seven PCBC; one FWC; two Essex 22 Feb (RM), a good showing.

Bald Eagle: one chased by crows between Blue Mountain L and Indian L HAMI 18 Dec; two ad Tupper L FRAN 16 Dec-20 Feb joined by imm 21 Dec; ad L Placid ESSE 1 Feb; *intro*. **N. Harrier:** two PCBC, late; male Chazy Landing 13-28 Feb, early or late? **Sharp-shinned Hawk:** at feeder Mineville. **Cooper's Hawk:** at feeders Plattsburgh and Wadhams. **N. Goshawk:** at feeders Elizabethtown and Wadhams. **Golden Eagle:** immature circled for ten minutes over Wadhams RR bridge spanning the Boquet R 24 Dec (Beth Edmunds and Dan Nickerson); perhaps the same bird at nearby Westport on 25 Jan (DS); at feeder Onchiota 7 Jan (RF). **Merlin:** 1-87 Exit 29 15 Dec (BK); taken in for rehab CLIN 17 Dec (DF). **Gyr Falcon:** gray morph at mouth of Saranac R Plattsburgh 7-23 Feb. **Gray Partridge:** Chazy Landing and Point au Roche Feb. **Ruffed Grouse:** at feeder Tupper L. **Wild Turkey:** at feeders Gabriels, L Placid,

and Tupper L. **Am. Coot**: one APt FWC, late. **Great Black-backed Gull**: max 235 PCBC.

Barred Owl: rehab bird CLIN underwent eye operation prior to release. **Short-eared Owl**: up to eight in fields near Chazy Landing Boat Launch 8-28 Feb. **N. Saw-whet Owl**: tooting Keene 13 Jan (J&PT); two-three tooting Clintonville ESSE 18 Feb (C&JH), early. **Belted Kingfisher**: three reports in Dec reflect mild winter. **Black-backed Woodpecker**: ECBC; SLCBC; Brown's Tract stream 15 Feb. **N. Flicker**: five near Essex 7 Dec (DS); six Ferrisburg CBC 17 Dec; others reported Hogansburg and Plattsburgh.

Gray Jay: at feeders L Clear, L Placid, and Raquette L; transient Paradox 9 Feb (*fide* MB). **Com. Raven**: 29 ECPC and 34 SLCBC suggest current numbers; at feeder Onchiota. **Boreal Chickadee**: reports from Cascade Ski Center, Eighth L, ECBC, Inlet, and SLCBC. **Tufted Titmouse**: four FCBC, five ECBC, high numbers here; transient outside Elizabethtown 23-24 Feb. **Red-breasted Nuthatch**: max 163 SLCBC indicative of high numbers where cones plentiful. **Golden-crowned Kinglet**: max 56 ECBC, high, for reasons less clear. **E. Bluebird**: max up to 50 frequenting Wadhams-Westport area in Jan; 14 FCBC, 22 ECBC, six PCBC, but none on higher elevation SLCBC. **Am. Robin**: max 77 PCBC; eight Cascade Ski Center 3 Jan, 40 St Huberts 15 Feb, ten Terry Mt 18 Feb; flock of 20 feeding with Cedar Waxwing on mountain ash in 3,000 ft Avalanche Pass ESSE 9 Feb (RB, MD). **Cedar Waxwing**: max 384 FCBC; 118 SLCBC, first ever. **N. Shrike**: six reports, more than last winter; at feeders Cadyville and Wadhams.

N. Cardinal: max 29 PCBC, total 58 on four CBCs, about average. **Song Sparrow**: five on three CBCs, good total. **White-throated Sparrow**: three on three CBCs, good total. **Dark-eyed Junco**: max 295 SLCBC, extraordinary number; widely reported. **Snow Bunting**: seven reports of small numbers; max 10 Raquette L 28 Feb (GL). **Com. Grackle**: Whallonsburg 18 Dec (DS); two SLCBC, unusual here in winter. **Pine Grosbeak**: reported Jones Pd, Plattsburgh, and Raquette L only. **Purple Finch**: 98 SLCBC; first singing male at Keene 18 Feb (J&PT). **House Finch**: max 461 PCBC. **Red Crossbill**: max 66 SLCBC. **White-winged Crossbill**: max 120 SLCBC, males singing after 29 Jan suggestive of nesting; ad male at feeder Elizabethtown 16 Feb. **Pine Siskin**: max 480 SLCBC; 225 L Shore Road ESSE 26 Dec (DS); singing at S Meadow by 17 Feb (J&PT). **Am. Goldfinch**: max 558 SLCBC; 250 at an Elizabethtown feeder 1 Feb. **Evening Grosbeak**: max 201 SLCBC; 75 at a Saranac Inn feeder.

Exotic: Mute Swan: two escapes near the Canadian border of CLIN.

Corrigendum: *Kingbird* 44(4):326: **Peregrine Falcon:** change "Keene (failed)" to "Keene (two fledged)." Although this brings the total of young fledged in 1994 to five, production was still down from ten young in 1993.

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REGION 8 — HUDSON-MOHAWK

JANE GRAVES

One of the mildest winters in many years was experienced in the Region. As reported from the Albany County Airport, December's mean temperature was 31.6°F, 5.1° above normal, with no below zero days. Sunshine averaged 44%, 6% more than normal. There was 2.58 inches of precipitation, 0.35 inches below normal. The month was virtually snow free, with only 3 inches total, 16.5 inches below normal. January averaged 31.3°F, a whopping 10.7° above normal, making it the seventh warmest on record and the warmest since 1950. Again there were no below zero temperatures. Between 12 and 22 Jan, the temperature did not go below freezing, and highs on 15 and 16 Jan were 65 and 62°F respectively. It was a cloudy month, with only 33% sunshine, 13% below normal. Precipitation totaled 2.11 inches, slightly below normal. Only 3.9 inches of snowfall was measured for the month, 12.4 inches below normal. It finally got cold in February with a mean of 22.8°F, 0.7° below normal. The first snowstorm of the season occurred on 4 Feb, with 13.3 inches measured. There was little snow the rest of the month. Sunshine totaled 65%, 13% greater than normal.

The mild weather and lack of snow cover meant that there was little feeder activity and that land birds were dispersed and not easy to find. However, several of the ten reporting CBCs had record counts both of species and individuals so the birds were present if sought. Water bodies remained largely open through January. Compared to last year, the Federation's Waterfowl Count on 15 Jan had an excellent count with seventeen species, including such unusual species as Redhead, Hooded Merganser, and an American Coot. Ken Able reported that hundreds of Mallard and American Black Duck were present in the Berne area, foraging in the fields during the day and spending the night on open water. Bald Eagle wintered in good numbers over open lake waters throughout the Region and during the entire season on northern Lake

George, which Laura Meade reports never completely froze over. As with last winter, gulls were generally concentrated on the Mohawk and Hudson Rivers in the Colonie landfill and Cohoes areas. Around 1200 Ring-billed, 4900 Herring and 800 Great Black-backed Gulls were to be found there during January and February. Both Iceland and Glaucous were present throughout the season.

In the southern part of the Region, numbers of Black-capped Chickadee were high in December. CBCs had good totals, with 600 averaged on six counts. Interestingly enough, however, at Jenny Lake, SARA, Robert Yunick had very few present, with no individuals banded in December, only one in January, and five in February. The easy availability of natural food kept large flocks of American Robin here throughout the period. A large flock roosted near Five Rivers Environmental Education Center.

The 129 species reported included 24 waterfowl, 13 hawks, 7 gulls, 7 owls, and 8 fringillids. The most surprising species was a *Northern Gannet* observed at relatively close range for some time but which could not be relocated. An immature male "Oregon" Dark-eyed Junco with a black hood, brown back and sides overwintered. Other rarities not mentioned previously included *Ross's Goose*, *Barrow's Goldeneye*, *Golden Eagle*, *Thayer's Gull*, and *Dickcissel*.

Contributors: Ken Able; Alan Devoe Bird Club monthly sighting reports (ADBC); Robert Budliger; Paul Connor; Bill Cook; Walter Ellison; Laurie Freeman; Jane Graves; Ron Harrower; Hudson Mohawk Bird Club's Birdline of Eastern New York (BEN); Cliff Lamere; William Lee; Alan A. Mapes (AAM); Andy Mason (AM); Nancy Martin; Laura Meade; Frank Murphy; Barbara Putnam; Dave Russell; Jim Sotis; Robert Yunick.

Abbreviations: ACCBC - Albany County CBC, 18 Dec; CCCBC - Catskill-Coxsackie CBC, 20 Dec; ChCBC - Chatham CBC, 17 Dec; FiveR - Five Rivers Environmental Education Center, Delmar, ALBA; FtE - Fort Edward area, WASH; HFCBC - Hudson Falls CBC, 18 Dec; JGCBC - Johnstown-Gloversville CBC, 26 Dec; ML - Myosotis Lake, ALBA; SaraL - Saratoga Lake, SARA; SI - Simmons Island, Cohoes, SARA; SSCBC - Saratoga Spa CBC, 17 Dec; TCBC - Troy CBC, 2 Jan; TomRes - Tomhannock Reservoir, RENS; VFPS/L7 - Vischer Ferry Power Station/Lock 7, SCHE.

Winter reports: **Red-throated Loon:** one SaraL 6 Dec (CL). **Com. Loon:** five SaraL 17-30 Dec (RH, BP); five other reports of singles. **Pied-billed Grebe:** one TomRes 4 Dec (WE, NM); one Copake COLU 6 Dec (ADBC); one Coxsackie GREE 15 Jan (RG). **Horned Grebe:** one SaraL 17

Dec (RP). **Red-necked Grebe**: one 18 Dec (ACCBC). **N. Gannet**: imm SaraL 4 Dec (CL, NYSARC). **Double-crested Cormorant**: six Coeymans ALBA 26 Dec (W. Raup to BEN) only report. **Great Blue Heron**: 22 reported including one overwintering Collins L SCHE (WL, RP); one dying on ice Hudson R near Catskill GREE (BC). **Mute Swan**: 71 Stockport Station COLU 18 Dec (BC); 122 CCCBC; two Ft Miller 4 Jan (RB, JG). **Snow Goose**: seven JGCBC; 120 Ft Miller 28 Dec (D. Beeler to BEN); 47 TomRes 7 Jan (RB, JG); five Cheviot COLU 15 Jan). **Canada Goose**: max 6810 CCCBC. **Ross's Goose**: one Ft Miller 28 Dec (D. Beeler to BEN) with flock of 120 Snow Geese; also seen by Barb Putnam on 31 Dec; NYSARC report requested. **Wood Duck**: one VFPS/L7 31 Dec, 29 Jan (WL, RY); two Mohawk R ALBA 15 Jan (PG); three Livingston COLU 8 Feb (BC). **Green-winged Teal**: four Dec reports; three Jan reports. **N. Pintail**: 19 ACCBC; four CCCBC; one TCBC; arr Hudson R Stillwater 11 Feb (WE, NM). **Gadwall**: two ACCBC; three CCCBC; two TCBC; one VFPS/L7 31 Dec (WL); one Stillwater 8 Jan (RB, JG). **Am. Wigeon**: three ACCBC. **Canvasback**: 2000 CCCBC; two TCBC; 375 Waterfowl Count 15 Jan. **Redhead**: seven Waterfowl Count 15 Jan. **Ring-necked Duck**: 245 ACCBC; one Stillwater 8 Jan (RB, JG); four TomRes 21 Jan (WE, NM, mob). **Greater Scaup**: one ACCBC; one CCCBC. **Lesser Scaup**: nine ACCBC; one CCCBC. **Oldsquaw**: one Germantown 6, 17 Dec (ADBC); one Catskill 20 Dec (BC). **Black Scoter**: one SRCBC. **White-winged Scoter**: one SaraL 6 Dec (CL); one CCCBC; one TomRes 21 Jan (WE, NM, mob). **Com. Goldeneye**: widespread entire period. **Barrow's Goldeneye**: two males SaraL 18 Dec (BP); two TCBC. **Bufflehead**: ten reports. **Hooded Merganser**: ten reports, max 92 TomRes 4 Dec (WE). **Com. Merganser**: max 370 Nassau L RENS 8 Dec (PC); 403 CCCBC. **Red-breasted Merganser**: three ACCBC; one 15 Jan. **Ruddy Duck**: five ACCBC; one Copake COLU 4, 6 Dec (ADBC).

Turkey Vulture: four reports throughout period. **Bald Eagle**: at least 13 ad, four imm Conklinville Dam, Hudson and Mohawk R, n L George all season. **N. Harrier**: 16 ACCBC; 25 CCCBC; 19 ChCBC; six Brookview area 9 Jan (PC); 18 FtE 20 Jan (K. Hanson to BEN); good numbers. **Sharp-shinned Hawk**: 14 on three CBCs; 12 other reports. **Cooper's Hawk**: 11 on seven CBCs; seven other reports. **N. Goshawk**: six reports. **Red-shouldered Hawk**: one overwintered Route 50 Saratoga Springs SARA; one Kinderhook COLU 1 Dec (ADBC), only reports. **Red-tailed Hawk**: max 94 ACCBC; 100 ChCBC. **Rough-legged Hawk**: 15 HFCBC; 20 FtE 5 Feb (D. Beeler to BEN); 17 other reports. **Golden Eagle**: one imm Stephentown RENS 24 Feb (*vide* RB). **Am. Kestrel**: 24 on seven CBCs; 11 other reports. **Merlin**: one Watervliet Res ALBA 3 Dec (WE, NM); one

FtE after 26 Dec (C. Fosdick to BEN); one TCBC; one Leeds GREE 6 Jan (BEN); one Cambridge WASH 4 Feb (D. Moulton *vide* JS) preying on pigeons. **Peregrine Falcon**: two reports, one CCCBC; one Duanesburg bridge SCHE 16 Dec (BEN), no details. **Ring-necked Pheasant**: three reports. **Wild Turkey**: many reports of large flocks throughout period. **Am. Coot**: 15 ACCBC; eight other reports. **Killdeer**: one ACCBC. **Com. Snipe**: one CCCBC. **Thayer's Gull**: one TCBC. **Iceland Gull**: nine reports, max five SI 25 Feb (WL). **Lesser Black-backed Gull**: one Cocksackie Boat Launch GREE 25 Dec (RG to BEN); two TCBC; one Green I ALBA 11 Feb (WE, NM). **Glaucous Gull**: seven reports.

E. Screech-Owl: 27 on three CBCs, high. **Snowy Owl**: one T Florida MONT 28 Dec (T. Palmer to BEN); one Ft Plain CBC 31 Dec; one Albany 4 Feb (BEN); one FtE 9 Feb (BP). **Great Horned Owl**: four ACCBC; seven JGCBC; five TCBC. **Barred Owl**: one CCCBC. **Long-eared Owl**: one SSCBC. **Short-eared Owl**: two CCCBC; max 31 FtE 16 Jan (B. Bidwell *vide* BP) good numbers throughout period. **N. Saw-Whet Owl**: one ACCBC; one S Cairo GREE 6 Jan (BEN); one Rensselaerville ALBA 17 Feb (K. Omland *vide* WE). **Belted Kingfisher**: ten ChCBC; overwintered widely. **Red-bellied Woodpecker**: 15 reports, max 25 CCCBC; one T Kingsbury/Argyle WASH 17 Dec (BP) has overwintered past three years. **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**: one CCCBC; one TomRes 8 Jan (RB, JG); one Schodack Center RENS 19 Feb, 2 Mar (PC), one at Galway feeder throughout winter (RH). **Downy Woodpecker**: max 113 CCCBC. **Hairy Woodpecker**: max 30 SCCBC. **N. Flicker**: max 31 ACCBC, 56 CCCBC. **Pileated Woodpecker**: max ten ACCBC, 16 CCCBC.

E. Phoebe: one TomRes 4 Dec (WE, NM); one FiveR 9 Jan (AAM), late. **Horned Lark**: max 200 FtE Jan 8 (BP). **Fish Crow**: two SCCBC; 20 SI/Peebles I SP SARA 19 Feb (WE, NM) many reports of wintering individuals. **Com. Raven**: 18 reports. **Black-capped Chickadee**: *intro*. **Carolina Wren**: seven reports. **Winter Wren**: max ten CCCBC; eight other Dec reports; one Indian Kill SCHE 10 Feb (RP). **Marsh Wren**: one Stuyvesant COLU 17 Dec (BC); three CCCBC. **Golden-crowned Kinglet**: max 55 ACCBC, 45 CCCBC, 43 JGCBC; 12 other reports. **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**: four reports; one overwintered S.U.N.Y. at Albany (KA). **E. Bluebird**: good numbers, max 75 ChCBC. **Hermit Thrush**: one ACCBC; ten CCCBC; one Christman Sanctuary SCHE 11 Jan (RP); one Saratoga Battlefield National Historic P SARA 12 Feb (BP). **Am. Robin**: max 2400± FiveR 18 Dec, 5000± on 29 Jan. **Gray Catbird**: one CCCBC. **N. Mockingbird**: max 23 CCCBC; one regular at feeder Guilderland defending winterberry and buckthorn from House Finch and European Starling (WE). **Cedar Waxwing**: 106 ACBC; 244 CCCBC; 119 ChCBC; 50

Galway SARA 16 Jan (RH); 20 Windham High Pk GREE 13 Feb (BEN). **N. Shrike**: six reports.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: five ACCBC; 35 CCCBC; one Mill Creek Marsh COLU 8 Jan (PC). **Com. Yellowthroat**: three Dec reports.

Dickcissel: one at feeder with House Sparrow T Argyle WASH 17-21 Dec (BP). **Am. Tree Sparrow**: max 348 CCCBC, 240 ChCBC, 309 SCCBC, 391 TCBC. **Field Sparrow**: seven reports. **Savannah Sparrow**: five CCCBC. **Fox Sparrow**: three Dec, three Feb reports. **Swamp Sparrow**: six ACCBC, 13 CCCBC; two Galway SARA 17 Jan (RH). **White-throated Sparrow**: max 271 CCCBC. **Dark-eyed Junco**: *oreganus* type at feeder after 17 Dec (KA). **Lapland Longspur**: six FtE 8 Jan (BP); one FtE 5 Feb (D. Beeler to BEN). **Snow Bunting**: max 260 HFCBC; 250 Palmers Ravine MONT 9 Feb (T. Palmer to BEN); 100 FtE 10 Feb (BP). **Red-winged Blackbird**: arr 10 Feb Livingston COLU (ADBC); reported throughout period. **E. Meadowlark**: four FtE 9 Feb (BP). **Rusty Blackbird**: four SSCBC; still present 13 Feb. **Com. Grackle**: reported throughout period. **Brown-headed Cowbird**: reported throughout period. **Pine Grosbeak**: no reports. **Purple Finch**: max 45 JGCBC; 15 Route 112 FULT 15 Jan (RB, JG); 15-20 regular at feeder Huyck Preserve ALBA (K. Omland *fide* WE). **Red Crossbill**: max 51 JGCBC; ten Pinnacle Road FULT 15 Jan (RB, JG). **White-winged Crossbill**: eight-nine Jenny L SARA 7 Jan (RY); seven Crane/Huckleberry Mt area WARR 11 Feb (DR). **Com. Redpoll**: ten JGCBC; four Crane/Huckleberry Mt area WARR 11 Feb (DR). **Pine Siskin**: 11 JGCBC; 16 Pinnacle Road FULT 15 Jan (RB, JG); one Gansevoort SARA 16 Jan (BP); "numerous" Crane/Huckleberry Mt area WARR 11 Feb (DR). **Am Goldfinch**: good numbers at feeders through period. **Evening Grosbeak**: low numbers all winter.

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REGION 9 — HUDSON-DELAWARE

MICHAEL L. USAI

December was characterized by continued unseasonably warm weather. The average temperature was 5.1°F above normal, making it the eighth warmest in the last 100 years. It was also a dry month with almost no snow cover. While the state overall received only 79% of normal precipitation, the Hudson Valley region received 97% of normal. The "nor'easter" on 23 and 24 Dec was the worst weather of the month,

with high winds and heavy rain. A cold front on 29 Dec brought in the coldest weather of the month, which ended with rain on 31 Dec. January continued with above normal temperatures that averaged 8.1°F warmer than normal. In contrast, January 1994 had averaged 8.4° colder than usual. What a difference a year makes! Precipitation was below normal in the southern parts of our Region, which received 92% of normal precipitation. The other parts of the Region received normal or slightly higher than normal precipitation. February brought our first and only large snowstorm of the season, followed by a couple of weeks of very cold weather. The storm came on 4 Feb and dumped in excess of 10 inches of snow on most parts of the Region. White Plains experienced blizzard conditions during the storm. The snow then changed to sleet and rain along the coast before the temperature nose dived that night, ushering in strong northwest winds for the following couple of days. That cold snap caused the average temperature for the month to be 2.5° lower than normal. Precipitation was also below normal, averaging 93% of normal.

The species reported this season reflected the weather pattern this winter. Fresh water remained open until mid to late February, resulting in a lack of waterfowl concentrations. Unusual species reported included White-fronted Goose, Tufted Duck and Barrow's Goldeneye. Unfortunately the male Tufted Duck that wintered in Rye the past two years did not reappear this season.

Wintering populations of some raptor species were higher than normal because of the absence of snow cover and severe cold, and winter finches went almost unreported this winter. In keeping with past winters, *Black Vulture* was noted and reports of wintering Golden Eagle were scattered around the Region. The lack of snow cover in the region resulted in high numbers of Short-eared Owl reported this winter. Only one Snowy Owl was reported and it was present for only one afternoon.

On the flip side, many species that normally winter south of the region were found. Many of these reports come from the area Christmas Bird Counts in late December, and most of them left when colder weather set in during late December and January. A *House Wren* remained very late, and a respectable six species of warbler were reported from the Bronx-Westchester Count on 26 December, and two additional warbler species appeared on other Regional Christmas Bird Counts. *Sharp-tailed Sparrow* and *Lincoln's Sparrow* were equally unexpected CBC finds.

Finally, Selden Spencer of Ulster County reports of evidence of a Black-capped Chickadee incursion this winter. He banded 12 in one

day in January, as opposed to the normal 2 or 3. The mean wing chord of these birds was 66 mm, which is longer than the mean of 64 mm for Ulster County chickadees, but is consistent with birds from a more northern population.

Two unexpected boreal species, *Black-backed Woodpecker* and *Boreal Chickadee* were reported. Certainly a nice find was a *Townsend's Solitaire*, which surely eclipsed the normally outstanding *Harris's Sparrow* also present this season. Two reports of Dickcissel were received. Other highlights include Red-necked Grebe, Northern Gannet, Great Egret, Eurasian Wigeon, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Iceland Gull, Glaucous Gull, Forster's Tern, Red-headed Woodpecker, Eastern Phoebe, Marsh Wren, Northern Shrike, Chipping Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow and Common Redpoll.

Contributors: John P. Askildsen, Bedford Audubon Society, Thomas W. Burke, John Burroughs Natural History Society, Barbara Butler, George Dremeaux, Valerie Freer, Sybil Gilbert, Andy Guthrie, Karl Kriegeskotte, Michael Lolya, Chris Luchini, Helen Manson, Christopher A. Nadareski, Frank Nicoletti, Hunter Pollock, Selden Spencer, Sullivan County Audubon Society, Henry Turner, Michael Usai, Ralph T. Waterman Bird Club

Abbreviations: BASH – Bashakill Marsh; BDR - Black Dirt Region, ORAN; BWCBC – Bronx-Westchester Christmas Bird Count, 26 Dec; CIMS – Constitution Island Marsh Sanctuary; EGR – Edith G. Read Wildlife Sanctuary, Rye; KRes – Kensico Reservoir, WEST; LHVBL – Lower Hudson Valley Bird Line; LISS – Long Island Sound shore; MC – Marshlands Conservancy, Rye; EOCBC – East Orange County Christmas Bird Count; PCBC – Pawling Christmas Bird Count, 2 Jan; PCCBC – Putnam County Christmas Bird Count; RTWBC – Ralph T. Waterman Bird Club; RCCBC – Rockland County Christmas Bird Count; RLSP – Rockland Lake State Park; SCBC – Sullivan County Christmas Bird Count, 28 Dec; WSF – Warren Sod Farm, ORAN; WFC – FNYSCB Annual Winter Waterfowl Count.

Winter reports: **Com. Loon:** nine BWCBC, one White's Hudson Marina DUTC 7 Feb, six EGR 24 Dec. **Red-throated Loon:** eight BWCBC, three EGR 22 Jan. **Horned Grebe:** ten BWCBC, 12 EGR 26 Jan. **Red-necked Grebe:** one EGR 24 Dec, 9 Jan and 22 Jan (TWB). **N. Gannet:** one EGR late Dec, seven EGR 24 Dec, one 25 Dec, and two 7 Jan. **Great Cormorant:** 35 LISS 22 Jan, scarce; almost none reported from freshwater areas. **Double-crested Cormorant:** 35 BWCBC, one SCCBC. **Great Blue Heron:** 21 EGR 22 Dec, 32 BWCBC, one on nest DUTC 28 Feb. **Great Egret:** two MC, BWCBC. **Brant:** 481 BWCBC, 279 EGR 22 Dec;

present LISS throughout the period. **Greater White-fronted Goose:** one Greenland race WSF 8 Dec-3 Feb (Ed Treacy). **Canada Goose:** high concentrations inland, max 10,000 Round Pd DUTC (RTWBC), >10,000 WSF 25 Dec. **Green-winged Teal:** one SCCBC, four KRes 5 Jan, five Muscoot Res 15 Jan. **N. Shoveler:** four Yonkers 26 Dec, one Orange 28 Dec. **N. Pintail:** five Muscoot Res 15 Jan, four LISS 22 Jan. **Gadwall:** 26 BWCBC, two PCBC; 18 EOCBC; 35 Muscoot 15 Jan; 18 Delaware R SULL 18 Jan. **Eurasian Wigeon:** one Monroe 6 Dec, one RLSP 5 Jan-mid Feb. **Canvasback:** down overall, 156 BWCBC, lowest in 45 years; 12 PCBC, low; 245 Hudson R Newburgh 18 Jan; 67 Rye 22 Jan, very low. **Redhead:** one Wurtsboro 14-18 Feb; one BWCBC; two EGR 9 Jan, nine KRes most of Jan and into early Feb, only two by 16 Feb. **Tufted Duck:** female KRes 16 Feb (MU). **Greater Scaup:** 1457 LISS 22 Jan, low. **Lesser Scaup:** 305 BWCBC, high; max 380 EGR 22 Jan, high, indicative of mild winter. **Oldsquaw:** max 380 EGR 20 Jan. **Surf Scoter:** one EGR late Dec. **White-winged Scoter:** one BWCBC and count week; imm. Kiamesha L SULL 28-30 Dec (VF); female KRes 8 Dec (MU). **Barrow's Goldeneye:** female with Com. Goldeneye EGR 1-8 Jan (TWB). **Com. Merganser:** 2000 Bog Brook Res PUTN 22 Dec;

Turkey Vulture: max six MC in Dec. **Black Vulture:** two Haverstraw Landfill Rock 2 Jan; one Galeville Airport ULST 8 Jan. **Bald Eagle:** record max 119 total (74 ad, 45 imm) se New York including the Hudson River, highest concentration of 89 along Delaware R SULL (Peter Nye, NYSDEC), scattered reports on inland lakes and reservoirs, numbers nothing like last winter's. **N. Harrier:** 15 Galeville Airport ULST 9 Jan, max 16 Ehners Farm DUTC in Feb (Gary & Adrienne Zylhuski), one EGR 6 Feb, several BDR throughout the period. **N. Goshawk:** one PCCBC. **Red-shouldered Hawk:** one-two MC through Dec, pair copulating near nest DUTC 16 Feb (RTWBC). **Red-tailed Hawk:** 103 BWCBC, high; albino spent part of the period at Ward Pound Ridge Reservation WEST. **Rough-legged Hawk:** one Neversink Res Dam 16 Feb (VF), two Ehmer Farm DUTC 26 Feb (Greg & Adrienne Zylkuski); several of both morphs throughout period BDR. **Golden Eagle:** two Stissing Mt DUTC throughout the period; imm Fir Brook Swamp SULL 26 Feb (VF); imm over Pawling on PCBC (SG, BB, CL); one Thompson Pd DUTC 11 Feb (RTWBC). **Merlin:** one BWCBC, one Milton Pt Rye 26 Dec. **Peregrine Falcon:** one Newburgh 25 Dec, one PCCBC. **Virginia Rail:** one MC 12 and 25 Dec (TWB). **Killdeer:** two EOCBC, 12 BWCBC. **Greater Yellowlegs:** two Larchmont 26 Dec; two MC 20 Dec. **Ruddy Turnstone:** 48 BWCBC with 15 at Mamaroneck Yacht Club; Dunlin: 67 BWCBC, 50 MP 26 Dec, 30 EGR 31 Dec, 60 on 7 Jan and 40 on 6 Feb. **Am. Woodcock:**

one Hurleyville 3 Dec; one KRes 19 Dec; one MC 26 Feb. **Bonaparte's Gull**: 88 BWCBC, max 20 EGR 26 Dec, irregular throughout the period. **Ring-billed Gull**: max 10,000+ Ashokan Res mid Dec (CN). **Herring Gull**: 1500 Ellenville, SULL 22 Jan, 1105 New Paltz Landfill Mohawk L-Ashokan Res CBC (SS). **Iceland Gull**: one Basic I Goshen 11 Jan; one Basic I WSF 8 Jan (JPA, TWB, AG); one Basic II Mangaup Falls Res SULL 25 Jan; one-two Basic I Haverstraw Landfill ROCK 17 Feb (LHVBL). **Lesser Black-backed Gull**: two Rye sporadically all winter; one Haverstraw Marina 8 Dec; one Basic III WSF 8 Jan; one Bowline Pt ROCK 25 Jan; one Wallkill R SULL 25 Jan; **Glaucous Gull**: ad Woodbourne 2 Dec (VF). **Great Black-backed Gull**: 115 Ellenville 22 Jan. **Forster's Tern**: last EGR 2, 7 Dec.

E. Screech-Owl: four PCCBC; several in DUTC, two EOCBC, nine BWCBC, two Bash 3 Feb. **Great Horned Owl**: four PCCBC; several DUTC; four EOCBC, 13 BWCBC; two MC through the period. **Snowy Owl**: one at a farm Bedford Hills 9 Jan, after a cold snap. **Barred Owl**: two PCCBC, one EOCBC. **Short-eared Owl**: max 21 Galeville Airport ULST, 16 still there 16 Feb; max 24 BDR until snowstorm of 4 Feb, after which none were reported; one MC 21 Dec; scattered reports from DUTC (RTWBC). **N. Saw-whet Owl**: one Wurtsboro 19 Jan, one Westbrookville 1 Feb, one Fir Brook Swamp SULL 18 Feb. **Red-headed Woodpecker**: one Bloomingburg early Jan; one EOCBC; one-two Blue Chip Farms ULST through the period; one Bedford WEST 10 Jan. **Black-backed Woodpecker**: one at Mt Kisco feeder for about 15 minutes 10 Jan (KK, NYSARC). **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**: three PCCBC; three EOCBC; one KRes 9 Dec; one Wiccipee 3 Feb (RTWBC). **Downy Woodpecker**: 167 PCCBC, high.

E. Phoebe: two SCCBC, one Orange 18 Dec, late. **Fish Crow**: 17 BWCBC; **Com. Raven**: four PCCBC, one Breakneck PUTN 5 Jan. **Black-capped Chickadee**: *intro.* **Boreal Chickadee**: one appeared sporadically at same suet feeder Patterson mid Nov through the period (Hunter Pollock) where one spent last winter. **Red-breasted Nuthatch**: nine PCCBC. **House Wren**: Rockefeller SP WEST 18 Dec (Richard Nelson); one BWCBC. **Winter Wren**: 24 BWCBC, high. **Marsh Wren**: one BWCBC, one MC 12, 25 Dec; one MC 18 Feb. **Townsend's Solitaire**: one PCBC, again on 3 Jan (SG, NYSARC); not found subsequently. **Am. Robin**: 300-500 Baird Pk DUTC 15 Feb. **Gray Catbird**: one PCBC, 15 BWCBC. **N. Shrike**: one irregularly Galeville Airport until early Feb.

Nashville Warbler: one BWCBC. **Yellow-rumped Warbler**: eight BWCBC. **Palm Warbler**: singles PCBC, RCCBC. **Pine Warbler**: one PCBC. **N. Waterthrush**: one BWCBC. **Com. Yellowthroat**: one BWCBC.

Wilson's Warbler: one BWCBC. *Yellow-breasted Chat*: one near Saw Mill R BWCBC

N. Cardinal: 289 PCCBC, high. *Dickcissel*: one PCBC; imm in House Sparrow flock White Plains after 18 Dec (Michael Lolya). *Chipping Sparrow*: two SULL early Dec. *Savannah Sparrow*: two BWCBC. *Sharp-tailed Sparrow*: one Hen I Rye 26 Dec, late. *Fox Sparrow*: scattered reports. *Lincoln's Sparrow*: one, first ever, Peekskill CBC (George Dremeaux), unusual anywhere in the Northeast in winter. *White-crowned Sparrow*: one SCCBC, one BWCBC, six Wallkill R Valley ORAN most of Jan. *Harris's Sparrow*: imm at a parking area Bash SCCBC, remained for two weeks. *Lapland Longspur*: six-ten BDR Jan. *Snow Bunting*: 50 SCCBC, 11 EGR 16 Dec, two Hunter Road DUTC 28 Dec. *E. Meadowlark*: max 30 Galeville Airport ULST through period. *Red-winged Blackbird*: eight Taylor Pd WEST 31 Dec; two MC 2 Feb. *Rusty Blackbird*: 40 at a feeder DUTC all period (Thelma Haight); roost of 55 Patterson Swamp PUTN early Jan. *Com. Grackle*: arr DUTC 5 Feb. *Purple Finch*: 19 PCCBC; one DUTC 1 Feb; three pair DUTC 26 Feb. *Com. Redpoll*: three Wanasink L. SULL early Feb; 12 Livingston Manor early Feb. *Pine Siskin*: six PCBC. *Evening Grosbeak*: 20 EOCBC

70 Virginia Road, Apt 18A, North White Plains, New York 10603

REGION 10 — MARINE

SEYMOUR SCHIFF AND ALVIN WOLLIN

The Winter season was warm and dry in December, exceptionally warm in January, and without snow accumulations until early February. On 5 Feb, eleven inches fell in Central Park. It was followed by two days at 10°F or less, finally warming toward the end of the month. At Brookhaven National Laboratory to the east, the three winter months were +5.4°, +8.0° and -0.4° different from the months' average temperatures. The deviation was somewhat greater and warmer there than in New York City, although the average temperatures in the city are always higher, in part because records at Brookhaven have been kept for a much shorter period. Snowfall at Brookhaven was only six inches. Even less fell to the east for this only storm of the season.

Birding results should have shown some difference after last year's excessive snow, but appeared to be just as dull in terms of passerines. However, because of the mild weather early in the season, several Eastern Phoebe and ten species of warbler, including Yellow-rumped

Warbler and Yellow-breasted Chat, were found during the Christmas Bird Count period. Another notable record was a *Wood Thrush* wintering in Manhattan. In contrast, there were no northern finches in our Region this winter.

The Austrian Pine groves on the south shore are dying at an accelerating rate and with them a significant amount of cover for birds. There were almost no Red-breasted Nuthatch this winter, and only a very few were reported on various Christmas Bird Counts. Whether there is a correlation to the dying trees is unknown, but the situation is uncertain and ominous for both.

In NASS a considerable amount of the sand pumped onto the beaches last year at both Tobay on the Jones Beach strip and at Pt. Lookout to the west disappeared in the first winter storm. Both areas suffered severe erosion with the bulk of the property damage confined to public facilities used during the summer months. This was in addition to the loss of beach area. On the other hand, a large sand bar has been growing in Jones Inlet on the Pt. Lookout side, just in front of the town's Fireman's Park, and where the Ross's Gull appeared last spring. It has become an important resting place for wintering gulls and shorebirds. A large flock of Bonaparte's Gull was here all winter. The large flock usually at Captree State Park at the other end of the Jones Beach Strip has been much reduced in the last few years. Consequently, the rare smaller gulls have now become more common on the western end of the strip. This season eight species of gull were found in Jones Inlet on the Pt. Lookout side including Little Gull, Common Black-headed Gull, Iceland Gull and Glaucous Gull. While not totally reliable on any given day, this location offers a very short drive from the Parkway, is conveniently located, and the area is easily scanned for rare gulls. Shorebirds consisted of large numbers of Sanderling and Dunlin with occasional Black-bellied Plover and Red Knot. In addition, Harlequin Duck wintered along the rocks immediately east of this site and Purple Sandpiper were on the jetties on the ocean side early in the season.

A December pelagic trip to Hudson Canyon from Captree SP on 3 Dec found nine species of seabirds, including Dovekie, was reported courtesy of NYRBA. Both Thick-billed and *Common Murre* were reported later in the season as well.

Some very rare and cooperative species spent the entire winter in Bridgehampton. They drew a large group of birding tourists to eastern Long Island. It started when a *Sandhill Crane* was discovered. This species is rare in New York. It drew birders from all over. A group from Delaware stopped to look for the crane and while searching one of the fields, found an even rarer bird, a *Northern Lapwing*. The ensuing hoards looking for the lapwing and the crane then found a Lark

Sparrow in a flock of a dozen White-crowned Sparrow in a neighboring hedgerow. Other birders found a Greater White-fronted Goose nearby. All of these species were still present at the end of the period. For once Montauk was not the star of the season.

Elsewhere an *American White Pelican* appeared for the second winter in a row. A *Townsend's Solitaire* was reported, and a wintering *Varied Thrush*, another rare visitor from the West, was enjoyed by many observers as it subsisted on meal worms provided and the normal things put out by home owners for the local starlings and pigeons. Other unexpected birds include *Eared Grebe*, *Broad-winged Hawk*, and *Black Skimmer*,

The 100 year old Bronx Zoo Aviary collapsed under the weight of the only snow fall on 5 Feb and eight Gray Gull, twelve Andean Gull, one Band-tailed Gull and twelve Inca Tern escaped. Except for lone Andean Gull and Inca Tern found dead, no subsequent reports of these birds within the Region have come to our attention.

Contributors: Bob Adamo, Howard Boltson, Thomas W. Burke, Ralph Cioffi, James Clinton, Sr., Lester Feldman, Henry F. Flamm, John J. Fritz, Ken Feustel, Paul H. Gillen, Carl Jaslowitz, Anthony J. Lauro, Emanuel Levine, Peter Martin, Beverly Prentice, Joan Quinlan, Barbara Scherzer, Seymour Schiff, Lore J. Schore, Steve Walter, Alvin Wollin.

Abbreviations: BCBC - Brooklyn Christmas Bird Count, 17 Dec; CCBC - Captree Christmas Bird Count, 18 Dec; HLSP - Hempstead Lake State Park; JBWR - Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge; JBch - Jones Beach; JBWE - Jones Beach West End; JIn - Jones Inlet; MeB - Mecox Bay; MASS - Massapequa Preserve; MCBC - Montauk Christmas Bird Count, 17 Dec; MPt - Montauk Point; NYRBA - New York Rare Bird Alert; NNCBC - Northern Nassau Christmas Bird Count, 26 Dec; PtL - Point Lookout; QCBC - Queens Christmas Bird Count, 17 Dec; RMSP - Robert Moses State Park; SNCBC - Southern Nassau Christmas Bird Count, 2 Jan; SI - Staten Island; ZB - Zachs Bay.

Winter reports: **Red-necked Grebe:** a few widely scattered from JBWR to MPt early to late Dec, six Smithtown CBC 26 Dec, others MPt to early Feb (NYRBA). **Eared Grebe:** one PtL 2-23 Jan (Angus Wilson, mob). **Greater Shearwater:** 14 Hudson Canyon 3 Dec. **Sooty Shearwater:** one Hudson Canyon 3 Dec. **Manx Shearwater:** two Hudson Canyon 3 Dec; one MPt 11 Dec (AL). **N. Gannet:** 150 Hudson Canyon 3 Dec. **Am. White Pelican:** one mouth of Patchogue R 10 Dec (Paul Vaccar). **Great Cormorant:** 27 South Beach SI 23 Dec, 37 on 24 Jan (HF). **Am. Bittern:** a few overwinter. **Great Egret:** BCBC, SNCBC (NYRBA). **Tundra Swan:** seven Hook Pd 11 Dec, three or four there through the season (mob). **Greater White-fronted Goose:** ad Mt Loretto SI 27-29 Dec (HF, Tom Brown), ad MeB 19-27 Feb (NYRBA). **Green-**

winged Teal: Eurasian race John Burns P Massapequa 28 Feb (Pat Jones). **Blue-winged Teal:** BCBC, four SNCBC, late. **Eurasian Wigeon:** eight-ten scattered from Brooklyn to Hook Pd after early Dec (NYRBA). **Tufted Duck:** Calverton late Dec (JC); ad Agawam L Southampton 14-21 Jan (Ari Gilbert), imm there 28-30 Jan (Bill Boyle). **Com. Eider:** 272 MCBC and two BCBC 17 Dec, CCBC 18 Dec, 1000 MPt 24 Dec, 2000 1 Jan, 3000 18 Feb, and lesser numbers there after (NYRBA). **King Eider:** MPt 1 Jan, four MPt 5 Feb (NYRBA). **Harlequin Duck:** eight JIn on PtL side; Shinnecock Inlet 21 Dec-6 Mar (PG); three NNCBC; SI 30 Dec-1 Jan (*fide* HF). **Com. Merganser:** three Wolfe's Pd P SI 19 Dec, infrequent on SI (HF); as usual, a small group wintered in HLSP.

Turkey Vulture: Oakdale 18 Dec (KF), Pelham Bay P 21 Jan (SW), late. **Osprey:** CCBC 17 Dec, Connetquot R SP 18 Dec (JQ), late. **Bald Eagle:** QCBC; Garvies Pt 2-3 Feb (Walter Paddison, Sue Ahern). **Broad-winged Hawk:** SNCBC, very late. **Sora:** MCBC 17 Dec. **Sandhill Crane:** imm Bridgehampton after 1 Jan (Larry Penny, mob). **N. Lapwing:** one Bridgehampton after 28 Jan (mob, NYSARC). **Am. Oystercatcher:** ten Long Beach 14 Jan, others wintered. **Lesser Yellowlegs:** MASS 8-23 Jan (KF, mob). **Marbled Godwit:** four JBWR 3 Dec, three BCBC (NYRBA). **W. Sandpiper:** 20+ with Dunlin ZB 10 Dec (EL, SS, AW), 50 Kennedy Airport 17 Dec, max 150 SNCBC, very high counts. Dunlin: 350 ZB 10 Dec (EL, SS, AW). **Long-billed Dowitcher:** four SNCBC, five MASS 15 Jan (NYRBA), late. **Red Phalarope:** 108 Hudson Canyon 3 Dec; MPt 24 Dec (AL). **Pomarine Jaeger:** one, plus three unidentified to species, Hudson Canyon 3 Dec. **Laughing Gull:** 27 Dosoris Pd 7 Dec (RC), one Hix I Long Beach 14 Jan (NYRBA). **Little Gull:** two PtL all season (mob), MPt 16 Jan (JF). **Com. Black-headed Gull:** a half dozen widely scattered from JIn to MPt. **Bonaparte's Gull:** max 1000-1500 PtL all winter. **Iceland Gull:** a half dozen widely scattered from JIn to MPt (mob). **Lesser Black-backed Gull:** two MPt 4-10 Dec, MPt 19 Feb (KF), Morgan I Glen Cove 26 Dec (Steven Radziol), others to 19 Feb (NYRBA). **Glaucous Gull:** MPt 10 Dec to 22 Jan (NYRBA), PtL 11 Dec (SS, AW), three MCBC 17 Dec. **Black-legged Kittiwake:** 308 Hudson Canyon 3 Dec; MPt 7 Dec (JQ); SNCBC 2 Jan. **Black Skimmer:** one Hix I, Long Beach 14 Jan (NYRBA), very rare in winter. **Dovekie:** one Hudson Canyon 3 Dec; 15 MPt 24 Dec, one 29 Dec to 13 Jan, one MPt 19 Feb (NYRBA). **Com. Murre:** two MPt 1 Jan (AL). **Thick-billed Murre:** two MPt 1 Jan (John Askildsen). **Razorbill:** two, plus eight other alcids, Hudson Canyon 3 Dec; one MPt 11 Dec; 100 MCBC; CCBC; SNCBC; 80 MPt 14 Jan; 32 MPt 21 Jan (KF); some at MPt to end of season.

Snowy Owl: on roof tops and vicinity of Bellerose, Queens 14-30 Jan (mob), JBWR 26 Feb (NYRBA). **Long-eared Owl:** CCBC, MCBC (NYRBA). **Short-eared Owl:** Captree Marsh 28 Jan (JQ), two JBWR 25 Feb (NYRBA). **N. Saw-whet Owl:** one NNCBC, two SNCBC. **Red-headed Woodpecker:** Central P 20 Dec (NYRBA).

E. Phoebe: two NNCBC. **Tree Swallow:** 13 overwintered in the marina area behind the Tobay Beach parking lot. **Red-breasted Nuthatch:** scarce. **House Wren:** a few on CBC. **Townsend's Solitaire:** one JBWR 3 Dec (Carl Jaslowitz, NYSARC), also logged at JBWR on 25 Nov by a J. Nugent. **Wood Thrush:** one St. Bartholemew's Church at 50th and Park Ave Manhattan 13 Jan into March (Steve Walter, mob). **Varied Thrush:** one at feeder in Flatbush section of Brooklyn after 21 Dec (Robert H. Clark, Donna Honicker, mob). **Am. Pipit:** six RMSP 6 Dec (JQ), seven QCBC.

Orange-crowned Warbler: Jones Beach 7 Jan (NYRBA). **Nashville Warbler:** QCBC (NYRBA). **Prairie Warbler:** Ferry Pt P Bronx 26 Dec (SW.CJ). **Palm Warbler:** RMSP 6 Dec (JQ), ZB 8 Dec (SS, AW), Garvies Pt 26 Dec (Bob Dieterich), two Deer P 12 Jan (JF). **Am. Redstart:** JBWR 10, 16, 18 Dec (SW). **Ovenbird:** one in SI backyard during CBC period (Howard Fischer *fide* HF). **Com. Yellowthroat:** BCBC, NNCBC, SNCBC (NYRBA). **Wilson's Warbler:** BCBC (NYRBA). **Yellow-breasted Chat:** wintered at MPt; MeB 21 Jan (NYRBA).

Chipping Sparrow: Heckscher SP 18 Dec, late. **Lark Sparrow:** one Bridgehampton after 30 Jan (Hugh McGuinness, mob). **White-crowned Sparrow:** about 12 Bridgehampton after 30 Jan (Hugh McGuinness, mob). **Lapland Longspur:** Great Kills P 28 Dec (Ed Johnson, HF), 17 Feb (NYRBA). **E. Meadowlark:** absent from s parts of Region, but some winter to the east and on the North Fork. **Rusty Blackbird:** 12 Shu Swamp 25 Feb (KF). **Boat-tailed Grackle:** 262 QCBC (NYRBA), one SI 17 Dec (*fide* HF). **Com. Grackle:** a roost of 2000-2300 Baiting Hollow Riverhead all winter (BP).

603 Mead Terrace, South Hempstead, New York 11550

CORRIGENDUM

The photograph that appears on *The Kingbird* 44:288; 1994 was mislabeled. The caption should read:

Figure 1. Great Horned Owl on nest in Black Oak, Vault Hill, Van Cortlandt Park, 19 January, 1994. Photograph by David S. Künstler.

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The Kingbird

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